

Education in Action:
The Work of Bennett College for Women, 1930-1960

Deidre Bennett Flowers

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
under the Executive Committee
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2017

© 2017
Deidre Bennett Flowers
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

Education in Action:

The Work of Bennett College for Women, 1930-1960

Deidre Bennett Flowers

This dissertation is a study of Bennett College for Women (Bennett College), one of two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) whose mission continues to be the provision of higher education to Black women in America. It is one of just over one hundred HBCUs still operating in the United States. This dissertation tells the story of an institution founded as a day school in 1873 and its reorganization in 1926 as a college to educate Black women. The study answers the following research question: How does student participation in protest and activism at Bennett College for Women between 1930 and 1960 broaden our understanding of the experience of Black women in higher education?

Located in Greensboro, North Carolina, Bennett College began operating through collaboration between the Woman's Home Mission Society and the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The College, under the leadership of David Dallas Jones and Willa Beatrice Player, revised its curriculum and developed and expanded its co-curricular offerings in a way that empowered students to raise their collective voice, and that fostered a dynamic culture of activism among its students, faculty, and the Greensboro community. Until now, little was known of their activism and protest during the early twentieth century. This dissertation explains how the College reviewed and revised its curriculum and developed a co-curricular program designed to meet the needs of Black women during the early twentieth century, with the goal of re-envisioning their role, place, and voice in American society. It also illuminates the students'

involvement in activism over a thirty-year period to better understand Black women's higher education experience in the twentieth century.

In addition to answering the research question, a history of the college is provided, with a focus on the early years during which David Dallas Jones and Willa Beatrice Player served Bennett College for Women as its first two presidents. I discuss how the curriculum revision and expansion of the co-curricular offerings lent itself to Bennett College re-envisioning the role, place, and voice of Black women in American society. I discuss social and gender roles, norms, and expectations of Black women during the period, as well as the rules and regulations that shaped higher education and campus life for Black women in the South generally and specifically for students at Bennett College. Bennett College publications were used to capture the student and faculty voices, in addition to the types of issues that concerned them, and around which they organized as activists, to advocate and protest. The implications of Bennett's students' participation in protest and activism are discussed, and how their activism challenged the gender roles, norms, and expectations for Black women in American society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I -- INTRODUCTION.....	1
Description of Dissertation Chapters	18
Chapter II -- BLACK WOMEN’S HIGHER EDUCATION AND HBCU STUDENT PROTEST AND ACTIVISM.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Research on Black Women’s Education: A Framework	28
The Purpose of Educating Black Women.....	43
Student Protest and Activism at HBCUs	49
Chapter III -- A HISTORY OF BENNETT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN	57
Introduction.....	57
North Carolina and Greensboro	58
A Day School, a Seminary, a College for Women	71
Bennett College under the Leadership of David Dallas Jones and Willie Beatrice Player	91
Conclusion	108
Chapter IV -- RE-ENVISIONING BLACK WOMEN’S ROLE, PLACE, AND VOICE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY	112
Introduction.....	112
Bennett College Re-envisioning Black Women’s Role, Place, and Voice	113
Curricular Change and Co-Curricular Development	116
Curricular Change.....	117
Co-Curricular Development and Evolution	132
The Home Making Institute	141
Conclusion	157

Chapter V -- STUDENT PROTEST AND ACTIVISM AT BENNETT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, 1930-1960.....	162
Introduction.....	162
Research Context and Significance, 1930-1960	163
Student Protest and Activism at Bennett College, 1930-1960.....	171
The Thirties.....	180
The Forties	187
The Fifties	210
Conclusion	224
Chapter VI -- CONCLUSION	227
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	251
APPENDICES	
Appendix A -- Abbreviations.....	263
Appendix B -- Glossary	265
Appendix C -- Bennett College Home Making Institutes.....	269
Appendix D -- Comparison of Illiteracy Rates	270

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started this dissertation journey in the fall of 2007, and while the African proverb says, “It takes a whole village to raise a child,” I believe it also takes a whole village to support a doctoral student throughout her graduate school journey. Below are a few of the people in my whole village who have made this journey possible, bearable, and worth the time invested.

First, I thank my Teachers College professors who have been on this journey with me for what seems way too long, yet just long enough to get this research project completed at the right time. Professor Cally L. Waite, thank you for admitting this student who barely spoke in class to the doctoral program in History and Education. You have helped me find my voice, and I plan to make good use of it. Thank you for your “tough love”; you pushed me, as I like to say, “over the edge” into unfamiliar territory because, in your words, I needed to know what happened before so that I could understand the time period I really want to study. I cannot thank you enough for this “push”; I certainly needed to be in uncomfortable territory to begin and complete this journey. I am a better researcher and writer because of your push.

Professor Bette C. Weneck, thank you for your patience with footnotes, and your encouragement and support for my dissertation topic. Your support did indeed give me “something to hold onto” as I researched in various archives in New York and North Carolina. Professor Ansley T. Erickson, thank you for providing research and writing contacts, as well as leads on student employment opportunities that expanded my research and writing experiences. The work in Columbia University’s Center for Oral History Archives has been an asset on this dissertation research and writing journey. I am grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Professors Farah Jasmine Griffin, Columbia University; Kimberly S. Johnson, Barnard College; and James E. Alford,

William Paterson University, for agreeing to be a part of my journey. Your feedback and questions have helped improve the work produced here.

I thank former Bennett College president, Dr. Johnetta Betsch Cole, for giving me this research topic during her book talk at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture on the evening of February 24, 2003. In addition, I am grateful to Professor V.P. Franklin for encouraging me to follow this research path when I was enrolled in his course at Teachers College in the Spring of 2003. You encouraged me to write on Bennett College's students' involvement in, and contributions to, the 1960 student led sit-ins because, as you said, "No one's written on this," and that it was "more interesting" than whatever that other topic was. Also, thank you for your note on the last page of my literature review encouraging me to "pursue it to publication."

For proofreading and providing feedback, I thank my former and current classmates, Dr. Fevronia "Nia" Soumakis, Viola Huang, Jennifer Boyle, and Jean Park, who have provided constructive criticism to help clarify and strengthen the argument contained herein. In addition, I thank Grace (Jinx) Roosevelt for patiently reading a very rough draft of my writing and providing thoughtful and constructive feedback on its structure and content.

No student or researcher completes their task without the support of libraries and the librarians and archivists who work in them. On this journey I have been fortunate to research at my favorite place, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. I thank Tammi Lawson and Steven Fullwood, who have both helped me locate materials in the collection related to Bennett College and the Works Progress Administration. I also thank Diana Lachatanere for her guidance and support during the time I worked at the Schomburg Center, and for her encouragement while I completed my studies. Additionally, I thank my contacts at Bennett College's Holgate Library, Joan Williams and Julia Scott. You opened Bennett's archives to me on my numerous trips, patiently answered my questions, and guided me to the best places to eat in Greensboro, North

Carolina. I also made several trips to the Rockefeller Archive Center to access the records of the General Education Board and the Ford Foundation. Amy Fitch assisted me with locating materials related to Bennett College and facilitated my visit and access to the materials.

Just I began dissertation writing in earnest, I started working in Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML) with David Olson, Cathy Riccardi, Jennifer Comins, and Celeste Brewer. They generously shared their time and knowledge of archive holdings, which helped round out the number of primary source materials reviewed and collected for this research project. They have patiently answered my questions about the difference between cataloging and archiving, rescued me from the stacks when I've been lost, and helped me understand the nuances of working with collection materials in the archives over the past year and a half.

I wish my grade school, the Modern School, were still around. It was indeed a special place for me and the other students who had the privilege to learn under the direction of Mildred L. Johnson. Ms. Johnson, as we called her, planted the seeds of appreciating history in her students from the founding of the school in 1934 until her retirement. I am grateful that she instilled in us a love and appreciation of Black history and made sure we knew and understood that Black Americans have made significant contributions to our shared American history. I learned this long before I knew how important her message, leadership, and teaching would be for my developing identity.

This group may be near last, but they aren't the least. To my mother Geraldine Lango, Gussie Lee Jordan Lango's oldest daughter, thank you for seeing without knowing, letting me find my own way, and for your unconditional love and support. To my husband, Mark Flowers, thank you for bearing with me and sharing the last 18 years of our marriage with Teachers College as I pursued one degree or another – I promise this is the last one. Phoebe Flowers, my favorite daughter, for reminding me why it is important, and why it matters to tell the stories of strong and visionary Black women. It is

so that collectively we can remember the past, and envision a future. I pray you will grow up to be both strong and visionary. My mother-in-law, Bonnie Ruth Peterman Flowers, thank you for reminding me to live life to the fullest, and for reminding me to smile and laugh often.

Every doctoral student should have his or her own cheering squad. Mine is composed of my sorors, Dr. Tomara P. Young; Doris Pauline Barry, and Cynthia Jackson – also known as the “Dissertation Patrol”; and Wendy Johnson. Thank you all for cheering me on, whether via text, phone calls, emails, from the church pew, or through the United States Postal Service. I am grateful to have had the support of my application to the doctoral program in History and Education from Dr. Howard Dodson, Dr. Sandye Poitier Johnson, and Dr. Antoinette M. Rogers. Their periodic check-ins as I completed coursework, conference presentations, and the dissertation helped me stay the course.

Last, I am most sincerely thankful to Starbucks for the provision of free “office space,” Wi-Fi, snacks for a nominal fee, and access to restrooms. Your stores throughout Manhattan made my early morning writing sessions bearable.

D. B. F.

DEDICATION

For

Phoebe Camille Flowers

As you seek to find a place for yourself in the world,
Add your voice to those seeking a solution to today's problems.

“Facing the Challenge,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1958

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about Bennett College for Women (Bennett College). It tells the story of an institution founded as a coeducational day school in 1873, and its reorganization as a college to educate Black women. As the College grew, it reviewed and revised its curriculum; and developed a co-curricular program designed to meet the needs of Black women during the twentieth century, with the goal of re-envisioning their role, place, and voice in American society. Bennett is one of just over one hundred Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that are outgrowths of the schools created in the years following the Civil War to educate formerly enslaved men, women, and children. Located in Greensboro, North Carolina, it is one of a few HBCUs created to provide education solely to Black women. Since 1935, it is one of two colleges that continue the mission of educating Black women.¹ This research is significant because it

¹The majority of students attending HBCUs are Black; however, the institutions have never excluded students based on race. Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 44-45, 181. William H. Chafe, *Civility and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 13. Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 98. Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Evolution of the Negro College* (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934), 119. Drewry and Doermann indicate that there were 12 single-sex HBCUs founded; 7 female – Bennett College, Spelman College, Scotia College, Miner Teachers College, Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, Hartshorn Memorial College, and Mary Allen Seminary; and 5 male – Cookman College, Johnson C. Smith, Morehouse College, Lincoln University, and Morgan College. Drewry and Doermann do not include Tillotson in their count of HBCUs for women; however, Holmes references the merger of Samuel Houston College with Tillotson College in the 1930s.

helps to tell a story about Black women's college experience in the twentieth century; central to this story is the students' engagement in protest and activism. Black women's experiences are missing from literature on women's higher education. It is also significant because it focuses on one of the two remaining single-sex HBCUs for women. And last, the primary source materials used to tell this story are from campus-based publications. Use of these materials incorporates the voice of students and Bennett's administrators to help tell this story.

This introduction provides my research question, as well as outlining and explaining the time period boundaries for this project, and also provides the historical context for the study. Lastly, I provide information on the archives consulted to craft the ensuing narrative. My dissertation answers the following research question: How does student participation in protest and activism at Bennett College for Women between 1930 and 1960 broaden our understanding of the experience of Black women in higher education? The narrative considers the intersection of higher education literature related to women's education, Black higher education institutions (HBCUs), Black women's higher education; and student protest and activism.

My dissertation considers the thirty-year period between 1930 and 1960. As the twentieth century began, the United States continued to grapple with the aftereffects of Reconstruction and its problem with the "color line." The most critical issue for Black Americans was the poor state of race relations that continued to plague the country, as evidenced in the *Scottsboro Case* and the difficulty getting national anti-lynching legislation passed by Washington, D.C. lawmakers. It was during the nearly 55-year period between 1877 and 1930 that America's Black citizens felt the full effects of Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, segregation, lynching, and race riots on their lives. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision rendered in 1896 was a signal to America's black citizens that segregation was lawful and would frame the lives they could live. These acts and actions

defined and shaped the tone and tenor of race relations in the United States and placed oppressive limitations on the lives Black Americans could live in the South.²

Several world events and issues shaped the years between 1930 and 1960. In this period, Jim Crow laws, lynching, and race riots defined and shaped American race relations. In addition, the Great Depression contributed to a precipitous decline in the state of American race relations. This decline was due in part to the unequal and discriminatory administration and distribution of relief benefits based on race. Unlike earlier periods, Black Americans became more vociferous and protested their continued oppression. Returning Black servicemen and veterans, of both world wars, demanded their rights. They were unwilling to accept second-class citizenship after fighting to make the world “Safe for Democracy,” which was the reason for America’s entry into World War I; and to protect the Four Freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion – abroad, the reason for America’s entry into World War II. Also during this period, the Black American community made significant strides toward securing full citizenship rights as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) actively pursued desegregation through the courts in the area of graduate and higher education, working steadily toward the lofty goal of abolishing segregation in public education and all public accommodations. Additionally, the National Negro Congress (NNC), formed as a grassroots organization, fought discrimination, specifically racial discrimination; opposed war and fascism; and during the Depression, worked to unite Black and White workers with intellectuals in the fight for racial justice.³

²“Borah Would Cut Heart from Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The Carolina Times*, January 1, 1938, 6.

³Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of The American People* (Boston, Mass.: McGraw Hill, 2000), 684, 691, 699-700, 757, 761-790. Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell. *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1981), 71-170. “Howard University Students Picket National Crime Conference in D.C.,” International News Press, Inc. December 1934, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, in “One Way Ticket:

I became interested in studying Bennett College in 2003 while taking a course on American Education and the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). While searching for a relevant topic, I attended a book talk at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, where Dr. Johnetta Betsch Cole mentioned that no one had researched the involvement of Bennett College's students in the 1960 student-led sit-ins and the subsequent desegregation movement in Greensboro. I soon learned that this was true; few scholars mention the involvement or contributions of Bennett's Belles in this watershed event. Credit for initiating the sit-in movement is given to the four male students from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State College (NCA&T), another HBCU located in Greensboro. There is no widespread public acknowledgement of Bennett College or its students' contributions to the fight for Black Americans to secure their citizenship rights, despite references in *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*; and more recent works, including *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* and "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938."⁴

Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North," exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, April 3-September 7, 2015. Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 103, 153, 158, 177. NAACP cases included *Murray v. Maryland* (1936), desegregation of the University of Maryland law school; *Gaines v. Canada* (1938), desegregation of the University of Missouri; *Smith v. Allwright* (1940), abolished the white primary; *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946), desegregation of interstate travel; *Shelly V. Kraemer* (1948), overruled the enforcement of racial covenants in real estate transactions; and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), which overturned the ability for state schools to enforce state laws which resulted in the differential treatment of students based on race and overturned the "Separate but Equal" doctrine of racial segregation.

⁴ Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 20. Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51. Since publication of this book, Ibram H. Rogers has changed his name to Ibram X. Kendi. Lorraine Ahearn, "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938," in *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*, ed. Naemah Clark, (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 90-107. A belle is a popular and attractive girl or woman whose charm and beauty make her a favorite.

A few things struck me about the absence of their contributions. First, this institution was a college for women. Women's roles in, and contributions to, the modern CRM were secondary to those of men, although in the last twenty years scholars have begun to uncover and insert women's contributions into CRM literature.⁵ Women were not viewed as active participants, as men tended to be acknowledged as the initiators of protest activities and leaders of movements, especially the CRM. This accepted fact is visually proven false by images from the CRM that show that participants in protests, mass meetings, and rallies included women and children alongside men. It became clear after some searching that not only were Bennett College's students' contributions to the CRM significant, but also that their engagement in protests and activism did not begin in 1960, nor was Bennett College like other HBCUs, which are broadly characterized as conservative institutions. In fact, protest and activism at Bennett College dates back to its reorganization as a college for women. Bennett was an activist institution whose concern for its local community and Black Americans throughout the country has been expressed and enacted almost since the day it was reorganized as a college for women. Its association with the Methodist Episcopal Church's (MEC) Board of Education (BOE) and the Methodist Women's Home Mission Society (MWHMS) ensured this was so.

In discussing the history of Bennett College, information is provided dating back to its founding following the Civil War (1873), its affiliation with the Bureau of Refugees,

⁵Linda Beatrice Brown, *Belles of Liberty: Gender, Bennett College, and the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, North Carolina* (Greensboro, N.C.: Women and Wisdom Press, 2013). Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998). Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, eds., *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005). Constance Baker Motley, *Equal Justice Under the Law: An Autobiography of Constance Baker Motley* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998). Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830-1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001). Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (BRFAL) (1874), the Methodist Episcopal Church's Freedmen's Aid Society (1866) and its Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society (1886). The thirty-year period between 1930 and 1960 was chosen because there was evidence that Bennett's students engaged in protest prior to their involvement in the 1960s student led sit-in movement in Greensboro. Their 1938 movie theatre boycott has been referenced in a few manuscripts, the College's literature, and in Black-owned and operated newspapers. These references confirm that Bennett's students' first known act of documented public protest was a 1938 movie theatre boycott. Bennett's students were not alone in their efforts to end segregation and discrimination in the early decades of the twentieth century, as American college students began building a political infrastructure that supported student protest on a national level in the 1920s. During this decade, they protested unjust social issues. Simultaneously, Black students on HBCU campuses protested the continued selection of White presidents on several HBCU campuses as well as off-campus issues, including their continued subjugation and oppression by fellow White American citizens.

This period was also chosen because it precedes the modern Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and represents the years during which the ideological foundation was laid for the public protest and activism to come in the 1950s and 1960s. By documenting Bennett's Belles activity during this period, I show that their students' activity started early in the decade and continued unabated throughout the period preceding the student-led sit-ins in 1960. This dissertation research shows that Bennett's students were continuously involved in protest and activism from its early years as a college for women. I chose to focus on the years leading up to the launching of Greensboro's student-led sit-ins to show that Bennett's students were not new actors in the fight for civil rights during the 1960s, and to get a better understanding of the foundation on which the individual and institutional decisions were made to sacrifice and participate in these activities. Bennett's Belles actively lent their voices and their bodies to the fight for

Black Americans to secure their civil rights. Its students have been there since the 1930s fighting against racist stereotypes and caricatures, denial of citizenship rights, and the debasement of their character. This dissertation covers their early years of protest and activism, stopping just after the February 1960 sit-ins.⁶

Bennett's fellow single-sex HBCU is Spelman College. Like Bennett's affiliation with the MWHMS, Spelman was affiliated with the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS). Located in Atlanta, Georgia, Spelman was founded as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary in 1881. However, unlike Bennett College, which became a college for women in 1926, Spelman was a school for girls from the beginning that grew into a college for women. Just one year after its founding, Spelman Seminary became the recipient of John D. Rockefeller's philanthropic largesse. His first pledge to the school was a sum of \$250 in 1883, and over several years he continued to provide gifts to the college that supported the purchase of land and construction of buildings during its early years. The Seminary's 1884 renaming was in honor of Laura Spelman Rockefeller and her parents, Harvey Buel and Lucy Henry Spelman, who were both active in the antislavery movement.⁷

Willa Beatrice Player actively supported Bennett's students in their protest efforts during the 1960s; however, her counterpart at Spelman College, Albert E. Manley, Spelman's first Black president, hired in 1953, did not similarly support his students' efforts. Speaking on protest activity in the late 1950s and 1960s, one Spelman student

⁶The terms Black higher education and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

⁷www.spelman.edu. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 240. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 27-30. Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College, 1953-1976*, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 17-19. Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967*, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 1-6.

reported, “Spelman is like a coffin. You have to fit it exactly either by stretching or shrinking. But nothing must stick out – not a toe, not a hand, not a hair.” Spelman’s chair of the Board of Trustees, Lawrence MacGregor, likened the college presidency to the role of a gardener: “A president is like a gardener – he must make sure things grow in their place – and if anything grows where its not supposed to grow he must get rid of it.”⁸ Another student, Alice Walker from Eatonton, Georgia, simply said, “There is nothing really here for me – it is almost like being buried alive. It seems almost a matter of getting away or losing myself – my self – in this strange, unreal place.” These depictions are contrary to the experiences of Bennett College students over this thirty-year period.⁹

These divergent presidential responses made me contemplate how a school founded during Reconstruction, and that developed at a time when Black citizens were expected and required to conform to, and be compliant with, the Southern power structure’s customs and laws, produced students willing and able to defy Southern custom to advance their social status as a race, and as citizens in the United States. To try to understand the apparent paradox, I read literature related to women’s education, HBCUs, Black women’s education, and student protest and activism at HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

Histories of women’s education rarely address Black women’s higher education experiences at either Predominantly White Institutions or the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that serve them.¹⁰ Literature on HBCUs has not generally

⁸Howard Zinn, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*, (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2002), 41, 45.

⁹Zinn, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, 41, 45.

¹⁰Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999). Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990). Thomas Woody, *A History of Women’s Education in the United States* (New York: Octagon Books,

focused on single-sex institutions and their students' involvement in protest activity; when it has, the works were written by authors associated with the institution as a former faculty member, an alumna, or president.¹¹ History related to single-sex HBCUs has focused on their leadership, or has been written by authors affiliated with the colleges.¹² Similarly, studies of twentieth century student protest and activism focus almost exclusively on activity related to the modern Civil Rights Movement (CRM) during the 1950s and 1960s, or Northern and Western student protest activity, but rarely the period that immediately preceded it.¹³ This research project addresses an absence in all four areas by studying the period preceding the CRM, focusing on a single-sex HBCU and its actions that inspired students to participate in protest and activism. This examination of

1929). Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹¹James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). Hoda M. Zaki, *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute: The Legacy of Alonzo G. Moron* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2002).

¹²Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College*. (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women's Leadership Institute, 1998). Linda Beatrice Brown, *Belles of Liberty: Gender, Bennett College, and the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, North Carolina* (Greensboro, N.C.: Women and Wisdom Press, 2013). Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College, 1953-1976* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995). Yolanda L. Watson and Sheila T. Gregory. *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman Presidents* (Sterling, Va.: Stylus, 2005).

¹³Phillip G. Altbach, *Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States: A Selected Bibliography* (St. Louis, Mo.: United Ministries in Higher Education; Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1968). Mark Edelman Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). Gerald J. DeGroot, *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (New York: Longman, 1998). Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies, *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

the period preceding the CRM provides context for understanding the swift series of events that occurred between the mid-1950s and late 1960s.

Although scholarly research interest in HBCUs has increased during the last thirty years, little of this attention has been focused on either of the two single-sex HBCUs. Absent in higher education and student protest and activism literature are the involvement and participation of women as initiators of student protest and activism, student protest and activism that predate the CRM, and HBCU students' involvement in protest and activism. Students at Bennett College were committed participants in, and supporters of, student-led protest activities that occurred during the late 1950s through mid-1960s. Evidence exists that their involvement in protest and activism, at that time, was not a new phenomenon. Rather, it was the manifestation of a long history of involvement in similar student protest and activism dating back to the early decades of the twentieth century. The period between 1930 and 1960 is significant for student protest and activism because it occurred during a time of significant social change in American history, when traditional roles and norms for women and America's Black citizens were challenged and changed.¹⁴

¹⁴Thomas Woody's comprehensive *History of Women's Education in the United States*, first published in 1929, barely mentions the education of Black women in America. It was not until the 1980s that researchers began to include HBCUs for women in general histories of women's education, such as Barbara Miller Solomon's *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women's Higher Education in America* (1985) and Amy Thompson McCandless's *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (1999). Mark Edelman Boren's *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* provides an international overview of student resistance. While there have been several articles and books published on student protest and activism, few have focused on protest and activism at HBCUs. Raymond Wolter's *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellion in the 1920s* focuses exclusively on student protest at HBCUs during the 1920s. Ibram Rogers's *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* provides an historical overview of Black student protest at PWIs and HBCUs from the late nineteenth century through late twentieth century. Robert Cohen and David Snyder's *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* focuses on student protest and activism in the South and acknowledges the lack of robust research on HBCUs and the skewed view this leaves in the historical record. James Anderson's research in *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* was groundbreaking when published in 1988, and sparked interest in research on HBCUs. Drewry and Doermann's research is on the state of HBCUs in

This work examines a subject that lies at the intersection of four areas of higher education research and is embodied in the actions of Bennett College's students. These areas include women's education at single-sex higher education institutions, Black higher education (HBCUs), Black women's higher education, and HBCU students' protest and activism. To date these have not been studied together. Bennett's first president, after it became a college for women, was a Black man, David Dallas Jones. Its second president who served during the CRM was a Black woman, Willa Beatrice Player. Prior to her promotion to the presidency, Player served the college as a professor and in several academic administrative positions. During the years of intense protest activity, she supported her students' decision to protest, and her support stands in stark contrast to the reaction of other HBCU presidents to their students' involvement in protest activity. The divergent responses from college leadership made me wonder what type of education environment fostered such convictions and activity among a group of Black college women in the segregated South.¹⁵

the late twentieth century and does not focus on student protest and activism in the early twentieth century. In the case of the two remaining HBCUs for women, available works primarily focus on their leadership, or their students' involvement in Civil Rights Movement activity of the 1950s and 1960s. These works include Brown's *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College* (1998) and *Belles of Liberty: Gender, Bennett College and the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, North Carolina* (2013); Lefever's *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement* (2005); Manley's *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College* (1995); and Watson and Gregory's *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman Presidents* (2005).

¹⁵Credit for planning and executing the student-led sit-ins is attributed to four male students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (NCA&T), although evidence exists that Bennett's students were planning a similar action in the fall of 1959. The participation of Bennett College's students in the 1960 sit-ins is barely acknowledged in the exhibit at the International Civil Rights Museum (ICRM) in Greensboro, North Carolina; or books that document the event, such as Miles Wolff's *Lunch at the 5 & 10*; Martin Oppenheimer's *The Sit-In Movement of 1960*; Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies' *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*. William H. Chafe's *Civility and Civil Rights* acknowledges their participation and planning efforts in the 1960 sit-ins. Linda Beatrice Brown's books *The Long Walk* and *Belles of Liberty* focused exclusively on Willa B. Player, and Bennett students' participation in Greensboro protest activity during the 1960s, respectively. Presidents at NCA&T and Greensboro College insisted their students were acting as individual citizens; therefore, the college had no authority to restrict their participation; or they insisted that students had no connection to their respective

Omission of minority-serving institutions from higher education literature prevents those interested in studying higher education from having the opportunity to examine and understand all of America's higher education institutions and their student populations. It also leaves out the experience of America's Black students. Their omission leaves an incomplete record of American students' higher education experiences. Exclusion of HBCU students' participation in protest and activism obscures the agency Black citizens, specifically Black students, exhibited. It also diminishes their contribution to the freedom struggle, just as does the historians' inability to parse the different populations from which protestors originated. College students were a part of the mass of protestors along with adults and children. Further, just as the failure to acknowledge Black women's participation and contributions, the inability to identify, or consider, students as initiators, sustainers, and participants in protest activity overlooks the effort and contribution of this sector of the Black community. Ultimately, it fails to provide a nuanced understanding of movement participants.

This period is significant for student protest and activism because of these very same social issues. Bennett's students actively voiced concerns about poverty, health issues in the Black community, housing and living conditions, and the treatment of enlisted Black men and veterans. They also protested the negative portrayal of Black Americans in film, peacetime conscription, and segregation. The active decade of the 1930s diverged sharply from the 1940s and 1950s, when there was little, if any, identifiable engagement in protest and activism among the nation's college student population. This dearth of activity is attributed to the United States' involvement in World War II, as well as the effects of McCarthyism, which encouraged destruction of files related to any communist activity. This analysis offers a valid explanation of why

institutions. Player's support for her students' involvement stood in starkest contrast to that of Albert Manley at Spelman College, Bennett's fellow single-sex HBCU, where students were urged not to participate in protest activity because their primary purpose at Spelman College was to study.

the period is perceived as less active, as well as a reason why students' protest and activism took a less visible form during these years. It also provides some explanation for the limited existence of detailed records related to student protest and activism in Bennett College's archives.¹⁶

In addition to their first act of public protest in 1938, the protest of two Greensboro movie theaters, Bennett's students actively engaged with the Greensboro community during the 1940s and 1950s to encourage voter registration and participation in elections, as well as advocating for improved housing, public works, and health care, all activities that represent some form of activism. These efforts were undertaken by Bennett College to afford its students the opportunity to advocate for themselves, give them "practice in community planning," and "develop techniques of social action" among Greensboro's residents. Further, Bennett College students voiced concerns about the condition of Black citizens not only in Greensboro and North Carolina, but also throughout the United States. Issues of concern included Blacks' military participation, the effects of national policy on the Black community, the eradication of racism, and segregation, as well as the uplift of Black citizens in general. By the fall of 1959, Bennett College students were in the process of planning and strategizing a public protest action against segregation in Greensboro, student-led sit-ins at the South Elm Street Woolworth's lunch counter.¹⁷

Literature related to Bennett's students' contribution to the 1960 sit-ins, a watershed event, is sparse, as is literature focusing on women's participation in protest

¹⁶Mark Edelman Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 112. Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xviii. Willa B. Player, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project" (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 117. Nadine Sherry Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women, 1926 – 1966" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2004), 222-223.

¹⁷Lois Taylor, "Social Action at Bennett College." *Opportunity Journal Of Negro Life* 20, no. 1 (January 1942): 8-10.

and activism related to the CRM. This absence stands in contrast to existing photographic evidence of the CRM, where the presence of women and children, alongside men, is noticeable as active participants in meetings, marches, and protests. My initial interest led me to discover that Bennett's students organized and executed protest activity shortly after its reorganization early in the twentieth century, and continued their protest and activism throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Little is known of these events or the acts that transpired between 1938 and 1960. The goal of this research is to present their story and an interpretation of the reason for and purpose of their protest and activism to expand the discourse on Black women's higher education experience and women's involvement in student protest and activism at an HBCU for women.

I believe Bennett College used its curriculum and co-curricular activities to educate its students and to create America's future leaders by empowering, inspiring, and instilling in them a sense of social justice to ensure they became productive and participatory American citizens. The broad research question for this project seeks to find out what Bennett College's students' engagement in protest and activism reveals about their college experience at one of two single-sex HBCUs between 1930 and 1960. This is important because there were so few HBCUs created to educate Black women, and Bennett College is the less well-known and endowed of the remaining two. Additionally, its home city did not have the same middle class population from which to draw, nor was it as urban and cosmopolitan. My dissertation draws connections between the curriculum revision, the co-curricular programs, and their protest and activism. It also reveals the gender and social norms that shaped Black women's education and the Bennett College environment; and shows how the students' reasoned and well-planned activism challenged these norms and expectations of Black women. In addition, my dissertation provides a description of the social context, within America and the South, that shaped black women's higher education experience, and how their stance against segregation and discrimination challenged the prescribed roles and acceptable norms of behavior for

Black women. An important factor in this research project is the support students and the college received from the Methodist Church, the college's faculty, administration, and its Board of Trustees; as well as the Greensboro and North Carolina community.

Several archives contain relevant materials for this research project. Bennett College's archive holds the largest quantity of materials that detail its history and work, among them, its student newspaper – *The Bennett Banner*, yearbook – *The Bennett Belle*, college publications – *The Bennett College Bulletin* and the *Bulletin of Bennett College*, and co-curricular activity reports. Together these documents provide information on student, faculty, and administrators' thoughts on current issues such as racism and segregation, Blacks' military participation, women's roles and place in American society, voting rights, living conditions, national policy, and the use of protest and activism as a means to improve Black Americans' place in American society. College administrator and leadership views were gleaned from the college's bulletins, catalogs, and correspondence in presidential papers located at Bennett College.¹⁸

Local newspapers, *The Carolina Times*, *The Greensboro Daily News*, and *The Greensboro Daily Record*, provide viewpoints on the public's response to student protest activities. In addition, articles on Bennett College were published in several magazines and journals, including *Opportunity*, *Ebony*, and *Mademoiselle*. These help to form an understanding of how the institution, its purpose, and importance, were portrayed to, and viewed by, the general public. Additional materials were located at New York University, the Greensboro Public Library, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, and the Rockefeller Archives Center.

¹⁸The *Bennett Banner* was first published in October 1930. Bennett College has at least three publications that include the word *Bulletin* in their name. The *Bennett College Bulletin* appears to be the catalogue that details the course sequence and annual academic calendar. The *Bennett College Bulletin* also appears to be used as the title for an alumni magazine; and the *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* appears to be a magazine; I have not been able to determine its target audience.

The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive Collection is housed at New York University's (NYU) Bobst Library. It holds the papers of James E. Jackson and Ester Cooper Jackson, communists and civil rights activists. Series X is a collection of papers on the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC), which was the student arm of the National Negro Congress (NNC). Formed as a grassroots organization, the NNC fought for civil and economic rights for Black Americans. Documents from this collection were used to confirm SNYC's involvement with Bennett's students.

The Greensboro Public Library's (GPL) North Carolina Collection contains local newspaper articles and clippings in their vertical file on Bennett College. Additionally, the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center - www.digitalnc.org - is a statewide digital archive. Its website makes copies of historical documents related to the state, its institutions, and organizations available to the public. The site includes historical yearbooks, newspapers, photographs, scrapbooks, city directories, and audiovisual materials.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture houses materials related to the African diaspora. Its Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division holds the papers of the Phelps Stokes Fund (PSF). The Fund made donations to Bennett College to support the graduate studies of its first president, David Dallas Jones, and provided funding to support the college's annual Home Making Institute (HMI). The Center also houses the periodic reports of the Phelps Stokes Fund covering 1910 through 1946, and their records covering 1893-1970.

Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library (RBML) contains several oral history projects. Collections identified as relevant for this research project include the Black Women's Oral History Project (BWOHP), the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), and the grant records of the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY).

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library houses the Joseph P. Lash papers. Joseph Lash was a former secretary of the American Student Union (ASU), a national student

organization that was added to the list of approved student organizations on Bennett's campus during the 1937-1938 academic year. The ASU files contain information relevant to schools with chapters on their campus and other national student organizations. The ASU documents confirm that a relationship existed between the ASU and Bennett College. Documents in the collection also confirm ASU's involvement with Bennett College's 1938 theatre boycott.

The Rockefeller Archives Center (RAC) houses the archives of organizations funded by the Rockefeller family. Collections used for my research include the General Education Board (GEB) and the Ford Foundation. The available documents provide detailed communication, publications, photographs, and relevant financial support provided to Bennett College to further the development of their endowment, library, science program and equipment, curriculum study, and health education programs. The Ford Foundation records contain information on the Ford-funded Management Survey completed in 1955.

I have drawn on materials contained in these archives to prepare the ensuing narrative. Use of their holdings has allowed me to craft a history of Bennett College that explains the significance of its founding, its early history as a college, its conversion to a college for women, and the enactment of its vision and mission during the early twentieth century with a focus on Bennett's role in re-envisioning Black women's role, place, and voice in American society. Their holdings have helped reveal the relationships between the College and its founding sponsor, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC); and its relationship to philanthropic foundations, and with national student organizations. Last, they also helped to reveal Bennett's network with local, state, and national government partners.

Description of Dissertation Chapters

Chapter II, “Black Women’s Higher Education and HBCU Student Protest and Activism,” uses the works of four Black women administrators and scholars, who studied Black women’s higher education, to frame and explain the gender and social roles and norms that shaped the education of Black women and how the roles and norms uniquely shaped the provision and purpose of education for Black women in America. I discuss the purpose of education in America, with a focus on its purposes for different American citizens based on their gender and race. Also explored is the way these roles, norms, and expectations manifested themselves on HBCU campuses, both coeducational and single-sex, and specifically at Bennett between 1930 and 1960. The origins of student protest and activism in the United States are also discussed, with a focus on early protest and activism initiated and sustained by Black students on the campuses of Predominantly White Institutions and HBCUs. The specific issues around which Black students protested on and off campus at HBCUs are highlighted to place the actions of Bennett College’s students within the larger social context in which America’s Black citizens lived in the Segregated South.

Chapter III, “A History of Bennett College for Women,” provides information on the state of North Carolina, Greensboro, and the social forces that shaped the lives of Black citizens in the state and city. I present information on its affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) through the Freedmen’s Aid Society (FAS) and the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society (MWHMS), in addition to the partnership established between the MWHMS, the MEC’s Board of Education (BOE), and Bennett College when it was reorganized as a college for women. The history begins from its founding and early years as a coeducational day school, and continuing through its reorganization as a junior college for women, and subsequently a four-year liberal arts college for women under the leadership of David Dallas Jones (1926-1955) and Willa

Beatrice Player (1955-1966).¹⁹ Profiles of Bennett College's first two presidents are included, in addition to the fundraising efforts that supported the development and expansion of the college's physical plant, and its early curriculum.

Chapter IV, "Re-envisioning Black Women's Role, Place, and Voice in American Society," explores how Bennett College, after its 1926 reorganization as a college for women, re-envisioned the role, place, and voice of Black women in early twentieth century America. I argue that Bennett College used its curriculum and co-curricular activities as a tool for inspiring student activism. Bennett's Home Making Institute (HMI) is discussed in this chapter. The HMI, an annual program, brought professionals in government, politics, and the religious and higher education community to campus to discuss relevant issues in American society. While initially a tool to further the MWHMS's interest in home making, the HMI's focus shifted over time, becoming an instrument of activism and a means of connecting with the Greensboro community.

Chapter V, "Student Protest and Activism at Bennett College for Women, 1930-1960," recounts student protest and activism at Bennett College for Women based on data from the College's newspaper, *The Bennett Banner*, and other publications, including *The Bennett Bulletin* and *The Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*. It follows the contours their activism and protest took place over three decades in the early twentieth century. Connections are drawn between student lives and the local, national, and international events that affected them. The chapter details the types of protest and activism Bennett students participated in and highlights the issues students organized around and protested against. Additionally, it reveals the strategic partnerships developed with local and national organizations, as well as the institutional and community support

¹⁹Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College*. (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women's Leadership Institute, 1998), 81. "David Dallas Jones," *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (Apr. 1956): 179-181.

that enabled students to participate in protest activity. Last, I explain what these activities reveal about their college experience.

Chapter VI is the conclusion to my dissertation. It revisits Chapters II through V, highlighting the significance of this project on Bennett College – its history; its work to re-envision black women's role, place, and voice; and its students' initiation of and participation in protest and activism during the early twentieth century. The College's work and its students' protest and activism are reviewed against Slowe and Cuthbert's research. This review shows how changes made to Bennett's curriculum and co-curricular offerings met the needs of Bennett's students as articulated by these two scholars who studied Black women's college experience in the early twentieth century. Last, areas of future research are identified.

Chapter II

BLACK WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION
AND HBCU STUDENT PROTEST AND ACTIVISM

Introduction

The history of women's education in the United States has been documented from the colonial period through the twentieth century. In these histories, readers gain an understanding of the factors and issues that shaped the development of women's education, the populations served by various types of institutions – single-sex, coeducational, public, and private – the effects of regional differences on women's education, society's expectations of educated women, as well as a hint at the impact race had on Black women's higher education experiences.¹

Scholars have noted the important influence a college's location has on the education provided to its students. Given Bennett's location – in Greensboro, North Carolina, its student population – Black women, and the time period of this research – 1930 to 1960, the South plays a major role in the analysis. When compared against their counterparts, Southern students were primarily Protestant, more rural, conservative, and less affluent than their Northern and Western peers. Southern institutions were also

¹Thomas Woody, Barbara Miller Solomon, Lynn D. Gordon, and Amy Thompson McCandless have written various versions of women's education history, all concentrating, in different ways, on primary and secondary education, higher education, education during the Progressive Era, and higher education in the South. Neither Woody nor Gordon addresses race nor HBCUs for women; while Solomon and McCandless do, in addition they both reference Bennett's students' involvement in protest actions.

reported to move at a slower pace to raise enrollment and graduation requirements, revising their curricula, and eliminating *in loco parentis* policies. Further, administrators at these schools often stood in opposition to coeducation and integration much longer than their Northern and Western counterparts. The South is also home to the majority of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), public women's colleges, and agricultural colleges. This demographic profile has led researchers to conclude that education in the South is inextricably tied to its past history and "contributed to a distinctive educational experience of women in the American South." There is no doubt that local issues, which communities grappled with, affect a student's sense of self and place in society. It also communicates expectations of place and role based on the student's gender and race. One researcher summed it up by simply saying, "The south is different," and that in the South, "gender, race, ethnicity, class [and] religion" all affected educational opportunities ranging from admission to curricular offerings and postgraduate opportunities.²

While women's colleges in the North and West were created beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, in the South women's colleges were created in the latter part of the nineteenth century. At that time, two of the greatest influences on women's education were middle-class Victorian Culture and the Cult of Domesticity, a value system that emphasized a woman's role in the home and ascribed to her the responsibility of the family and home, where she was the center of family life. Coupled with the prominence of Victorian values, the tenets of the cult of domesticity reinforced women's place in the home and "glorified" the responsibilities of their roles there. This glorification imposed limitations on women's ability to participate in political discussion or pursue employment

²Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 1, 2, ix. Gordon devotes one chapter of *Gender and Education in the Progressive Era* to schools in the South and discusses Sophie Newcomb and Agnes Scott Colleges. Gordon does not significantly discuss race or Black women's higher education during the Progressive Era.

outside the home, and obscured any legal rights they may have had as citizens of the United States.³

Works on women's education history focus on its origins and the purposes for which women were to be educated. Women's need for education in America was justified, in part, on a belief in the notion of Republican Motherhood, an idea based on the conviction that there were separate spheres for men and women. Women's sphere was the home; therefore, because of their role as caregivers and mothers, it made practical sense for women to be educated to ensure that they raised responsible male citizens. Although primary and secondary education was provided, women had to fight for the right to higher education. Few saw a purpose, even women's colleges, in documenting the history of women's education until the early twentieth century, when an extensive history of women's education in the United States was compiled and published in 1929. Although this work was the most comprehensive history to date, it virtually omitted any reference to Black women and the HBCUs that served them. It was not until the 1980s that researchers began to take a long look at the lived experience of college women. These histories focused on women's access, their collegiate experience, and the effects of higher education on their life choices, as well as connections between feminism and women's educational advancement. Researchers also studied generations of college women to determine patterns across time and make generalizations about women's collegiate experience during specific time periods. For example, it was noted that attaining a college education did not prevent women from marriage and parenting. Another observation was that higher education allowed women to be active change agents for themselves. In addition, higher education was also credited with giving women

³Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), 8. Linda M. Perkins, "The Impact of The 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women," *Journal of Social Issues* 39, no. 3 (1982): 18, 22. The Cult of True Womanhood and the Cult of Domesticity are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

an individual “identity of their own” versus that which society carved out for, or ascribed to, them. Society’s ascribed identity for women typically involved them being a “stable unchanging element in a changing world.”⁴

None of these monographs focus on one specific institution, but rather look broadly to make generalizations about women’s education opportunities and education experiences – primary, secondary, and higher education. More recent works have begun to include examples of specific institutions to highlight patterns in women’s higher education. While information on the experiences of other ethnicities and races, and the institutions that served these students, is missing or excluded in most works, some scholars include single-sex HBCUs in their studies of women’s higher education. Women’s HBCUs were, as were their coeducational counterparts, the outgrowths of normal schools and seminaries that began to educate Black Americans following the Civil War. The mission of these institutions was provision of education to Black women in an environment and region of the country that devalued their existence and saw their role in American society solely as subservient.⁵

⁴Perkins, “The Impact of the ‘Cult of True Womanhood’ on the Education of Black Women,” 17-18. Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College* (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women’s Leadership Institute, 1998), 46. Jeanne L. Noble, “The Negro Woman’s College Education” (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University 1955), 23, 29. Thomas Woody, *The History of Women’s Education in the United States*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1929). Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii, xviii. Lynn Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990). Maxine Schwartz Seller, “A History of Women’s Education in the United States: Thomas A Woody’s Classic, Sixty Years Later,” *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1989), 99. At the time that Woody compiled *A History of Women’s Education*, Bennett College had not yet become a college for women; Spelman became a college in 1897; in 1924, its name was changed to Spelman College, and the elementary department was dropped in 1928. In 1932, both Bennett College and Spelman College received a rating from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS).

⁵Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*. Seller, “A History of Women’s Education in the United States: Thomas A Woody’s Classic, Sixty Years Later,” 102.

Literature on HBCUs provides an overview of the development of Black education institutions in the years immediately following the Civil War, beginning with the struggle for universal education and continuing through the development of normal, common, and high schools. In some cases, they evolved into higher education institutions. This research has dispelled myths surrounding the development of Black education in the South, showing that during the post-bellum and Reconstruction period, Blacks had “their own ideas about learning and self improvement,” and that the formerly enslaved planned to train and educate their young for futures they believed included “full equality and autonomy.” Unfortunately, in America, education was used for differential purposes based upon one’s belief about the education recipient’s role in American society. Education served one of two purposes: the student received education either for “democratic citizenship” or for “second class citizenship.”⁶

In more recent research, HBCUs are recognized for their contribution to serving a “neglected sector” of students in America’s “variegated” higher education system. For many Black students, HBCUs were the only option available for them to pursue college-level education for nearly a century between the end of the Civil War and the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision. The literature calls to those interested in the study of HBCUs to understand the social forces that shaped the creation and development of these institutions and the role they played in meeting the needs of Black students.⁷

⁶James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 281, 3, 1.

⁷Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 1-2, 279, 281. Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), xv, xvi, xxi, and xxii. The authors call for more research on institutions that serve not only Black students, but Native Americans and women, because they are a significant component of America’s “unique, complicated, and diverse” higher education system worthy of study.

While laying the foundation and making a case for additional research related to Black education, these books only speak generally about HBCUs and do not focus on any one institution. Several references are made to women's HBCUs – Bennett, Spelman, and Tillotson Colleges – in relation to their denominational and missionary affiliations. Works discussing single-sex HBCUs have been written by people associated with the institutions, and most often focus on their presidential leadership. This literature is in the form of biographies and autobiographies, with references to student protest and activism.⁸

For a robust understanding of Black women's higher education experience, I looked to published articles and dissertations focused solely on Black women's higher education to become familiar with their education needs, the challenges they faced, and issues that shaped their education experience. Black women began assessing their own education needs through research and writing early in the twentieth century. Though there had been a long struggle for women to gain access to higher education institutions, by the time Black women were able to pursue higher education, the issue of women's right to higher education had been resolved. Most efforts to provide education to Black women were focused on teacher training for both practical and hegemonic purposes. Black women, like White women, were expected to become teachers, as this was a natural extension of their gender role expectation – being a caregiver and nurturer. Their

⁸Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 239-240, 276, 134. Drewry and Doermann, *Stand and Prosper*, 98. Works on Bennett College include *The Long Walk* and *Belles of Liberty*, both written by Bennett College for Women alumna Linda Beatrice Brown ('61) and niece of Willa B. Player. Works on Spelman College include books written by former professor Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight*; memoirs by former professor and historian Howard Zinn, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*, and alumna Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns*, as well as a former president, Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues*. Additional works on college presidents include former Hampton University Political Science professor Hoda M. Zaki's *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute*, Benjamin May's *Born to Rebel*, and Raymond Wolters study of six HBCUs in *The New Negro on Campus*. Works specifically on presidents at women's HBCUs include Albert Manley's *A Legacy Continues*, Linda Beatrice Brown's *The Long Walk*, and Watson and Gregory's *Daring to Educate*.

main purpose in becoming teachers was to help educate the newly freed men, women, and children in an effort to uplift the race.⁹

Scholars interested in Black women's higher education experience have continued their call for more research. Their call represents a continuous effort to advance the work of Lucy Diggs Slowe. Since Slowe's research during the 1930s, three dissertations have been completed by Marion Vera Cuthbert, Willa Beatrice Player, and Jean Laveta Noble, which study different aspects of Black women's higher education experience, and they offer insight into the role Black women played in securing their own freedom and citizenship rights as they struggled for "racial and sexual equality." Black women's continued invisibility in higher education literature makes it important to learn who these women were, what they did, and the issues and movements in which they engaged to change their world for the better. Sufficient literature on Black women's higher education experience does not yet exist. More research is necessary to understand their experiences at different points in time and in different types of institutions. This dissertation begins filling this void.¹⁰

⁹Lucy D. Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women." *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1933): 352-358. Bettye Collier-Thomas, "The Impact of Black Women in Education: An Historical Overview," *Journal of Negro Education* 51, no. 3 (1982): 175. Patricia Bell-Scott, "Black Women's Higher Education: Our Legacy," *Sage Magazine* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 8. Gordon's work focuses on women's colleges in several regions throughout the United States. However neither of the two colleges, Sophie Newcomb or Agnes Scott, discussed from the South were women's HBCUs.

¹⁰Collier-Thomas, "The Impact of Black Women in Education," 173-180. Bell-Scott, *Black Women's Higher Education*, 9-10. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 93, 158. Since the 1980s, several Black women historians have worked to insert the experiences of Black women into the field of history. They include Deborah Gray-White, Nell Irvin Painter, Darlene Clarke-Hine, and Barbara Ransby.

Research on Black Women's Education: A Framework

Black women have a history of striving for education beyond what their gender or their color seemed to prescribe.¹¹

The above quote is from *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. The title is derived from a passage in *A Voice from the South* and declares to its readers that the Black woman is the only one who has the right to define who she is for herself, and, on her own terms, the condition of her personhood.

Only the Black Woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole *Negro race enters with me*.'¹²

This opening quote draws the reader's attention to the fact that the Black community, and Black women in particular, have used education as a tool to advance in American society, determining and securing for themselves, and the Black community as a whole, their rightful role, place, and voice in American society.¹³

In her dissertation, "The Negro Woman's College Education," Jeanne Laveta Noble posed two important questions: "Why Study the Negro Woman College Graduate?" and "Why Should the Negro be Studied Further?" One study respondent observed, "Negroes have been guinea pigs long enough."¹⁴ Noble's response to this observation was: "It is within [the researcher's] academic rights to study any element of the population with the purpose of 'lifting the veils of ignorance and thereby furthering knowledge and understanding.'¹⁵ At the time Noble researched and wrote, Black

¹¹Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 7.

¹²Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 31. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 7.

¹³Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, 31.

¹⁴Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, 2.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

Americans were still waging a fierce battle within the country to have their rights, those guaranteed by the Constitution to each American citizen, recognized and respected by White Americans. Black Americans were still discriminated against, and primarily limited to attending one of the hundred or so colleges that grew out of schools created, following the Civil War, to educate the newly freed men, women, and children. Noble's response, in context, is understandable given that as a group Black Americans were still marginalized and excluded from much of mainstream America except when and where they fit into their "proper place." This proper place was all too often in a personal service role, silent and unseen. Many of the studies Noble encountered on women's education, while completing her dissertation research, carried the following caveat: "This study cannot be generalized to Negroes because there were not enough of them in the sample."¹⁶

Noble's dissertation followed a path initiated by Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University's first Dean of Women, in the 1930s on the status of Black women's education. Slowe's research was followed by the work of Marion Vera Cuthbert, whose 1942 dissertation, "Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate," searched for an understanding of the Black woman college graduate's view of her place in American society. Former Bennett College president Willa Beatrice Player's 1948 dissertation, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College," explained how Bennett College responded to Black women's higher education needs by revising its curriculum during the 1940s. Jeanne Noble's dissertation analyzed the responses of Black women college graduates to a questionnaire that assessed what they wanted, and what they received from their college education. Collectively, the work and research of these four scholars and practitioners sought to insert, and make relevant, the

¹⁶Ibid., 2. The studies Noble refers to include Robert G. Foster and Pauline Wilson's *Women after College*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); Ernest Havemann and Patricia West's, *They Went to College*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952).

experience of the Black woman in American higher education history. Their observations, research, and policy recommendations were a corrective, and the beginning steps toward questioning and developing an understanding of the challenges facing Black women in early twentieth century America as they pursued their higher education goals. What was clear to these early researchers, administrators, and scholars was that Black women were an important factor in the Black community and American society. Yet not enough was known about her college or post-graduate experiences, nor her views on whether the college education she received served her well after graduation, as she made a life for herself and her family in America.¹⁷

Just as women's colleges were being established, slavery ended. With its end, more than 200 private and denominational schools were created in the South in the years following the Civil War to educate former slaves and their descendants. Some of these schools developed into collegiate institutions, HBCUs, by the early twentieth century. Of those created, only a few were single-sex institutions, while the majority were coeducational. This fact stands in contrast to the nation's oldest private colleges founded beginning in the seventeenth century, many of which did not open their doors to Black or female students until well into the twentieth century. That HBCUs, public and private, were coeducational from their start is best understood as a matter of practicality. Following the Civil War, there was an urgent need to provide a "rudimentary education"

¹⁷Lucy Diggs Slowe, Marion Vera Cuthbert, Willa Beatrice Palter, and Jeanne Laveta Noble are all alumnae of Teachers College, Columbia University. Slowe graduated from Teachers College in 1915, taught English and became the first Dean of Women at Howard University in 1922; she served Howard University until her death in 1937. Marion Vera Cuthbert graduated from Teachers College in 1942; she served as Dean of Women at Talladega College in Alabama from 1927 through 1930, and subsequently as Dean of Women at Brooklyn College in New York City from 1944 through 1961. Willa Beatrice Player was a 1948 graduate of Teachers College; she served Bennett College in various capacities for 36 years, ending her time as president of the college in 1966. After leaving Bennett, Player worked for the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare as the Director of the Division of College Support. Jeanne Laveta Noble graduated from Teachers College in 1956; she was a professor at New York University and served on education commissions for several presidents, headed Job Corps, and served on the Board of Girl Scouts of the USA.

to the more than four million formerly enslaved men, women, and children to advance and uplift the race and help them progress in American society. Based on the magnitude of this undertaking, it was clear that the creation of numerous single-sex schools was not a viable option.¹⁸ Additionally, the commonly accepted belief was that “blacks, and white women,” were “intellectually inferior to white men,” and the prevailing view was that “neither group should be educated at all,” or only “be educated to fulfill adequately their prescribed place in society – the good and dutiful wife and mother and the respectable and humble black person.”¹⁹

Race played an important part in the education of American women. It resulted in the differential provision of education for Black women just as it had for Black Americans in general. While there were a few Black women who attended Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), most attended coeducational HBCUs. For White women, education was to prepare the student to develop “homemaker skills,” to reinforce “the role of wife and mother, and provide a milieu for finding a potential husband.” Conversely, for Black women, education was to serve as a vehicle for “race uplift,”

¹⁸Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, 15-16, 21-22, 24, 26. Drewry and Doermann, *Stand and Prosper*, 98. Drewry and Doermann indicate that there were 12 single-sex HBCUs founded; 7 female – Bennett College, Spelman College, Scotia College, Miner Teachers College, Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, Hartshorn Memorial College, and Mary Allen Seminary; and 5 male – Cookman College, Johnson C. Smith, Morehouse College, Lincoln University, and Morgan College. Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 13. Since publication of this book, Ibram H. Rogers has changed his name to Ibram X. Kendi. Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History, Second Edition*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 168. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 3. Today there are slightly more than 100 HBCUs operating, with only three single-sex institutions remaining – Morehouse College (1867), Bennett College (1873), and Spelman College (1881). Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 144-145. Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, 26, 21, 15-16, 24. Lucy D. Slowe, “Higher Education of the Negro Woman,” 352-358. Bell-Scott, “Black Women's Higher Education: Our Legacy,” 8-11.

¹⁹Linda M. Perkins, “The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*, eds. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 64-65.

specifically to improve the conditions under which the entire race lived. Black women's prior enslavement precluded them from being "perceived as women" by White American society because they had been property. This fact complicated the purpose and experience of their higher education.²⁰

Single-sex HBCUs, like Bennett and Spelman, had unique missions to educate Black women in the segregated South. Their main focus was to address the "needs" of Black women. Many felt the most urgent need was addressing Black women's multiple identities. By virtue of their gender and race, Black American women had to surmount "barriers of sex and color" while living in at least two separate worlds, "America and Negro America." Several scholars go further and assert that Black women's lives were couched in multiple identities, an idea derived from W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of the "double consciousness" of Black American citizens. When gender is taken into account, Black women's complicated identities reveal the multiple "consciousnesses" with which they live. This multi-consciousness encompasses several aspects of the Black woman's identity that shape their lived experience – race, gender, socioeconomic status, citizenship, and the intersection of their race and gender. The addition of region further complicated Black women's roles and identities.²¹

College education in America was designed to produce scholars and to "furnish leadership for the masses of people."²² Given this fact, education has been used for differential purposes based upon beliefs about the education recipient's role in American

²⁰Perkins, "The Impact of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women," 17-18, 22. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 46. Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, 28, 15,16, 23-24. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 144-145. Slowe, "Higher Education of the Negro Woman," 352-358. Bell-Scott, "Black Women's Higher Education: Our Legacy," 8-11.

²¹Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 152-153. Bell-Scott, "Black Women's Higher Education," 8-11. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 1, 72, and 181.

²²Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," 354.

society. Education has served one of two purposes, either the student received education for “democratic citizenship” or “second class citizenship.”²³ Following the Civil War, the Black education debate shifted from the antebellum debate over education for colonization or Americanization to an agreement between “paternal liberals” and “egalitarian elites” during Reconstruction that “HBCUs were to raise an army of teachers and preachers (and to a lesser extent professionals, politicians and entrepreneurs) to guide the race out of their hundreds of years of political captivity, forced illiteracy and supposed moral degradation.”²⁴ Essentially, education for Blacks was fashioned to keep them in a subordinate social and economic status within the United States, and in the South in particular. This dual function of education reflected the struggle between America’s social systems, one that originated with slavery and peasantry, the other an outgrowth of capitalism and free labor. The true struggle over control of Black education was to determine the definition and “social reality” of Blacks in the South, and how the future of Southern society should be shaped.²⁵

Studies undertaken between the 1930s and 1950s assessed the higher education needs of Black women and the results of their education process. As part of her 1932 study, Lucy Diggs Slowe sent questionnaires to 76 institutions providing collegiate education to Black women to understand whether the college “consciously attempted to prepare Negro college women for intelligent participation and leadership.” Forty-four responses were received to the six-question survey, which asked the following,

1. How many women of college grade are enrolled in your school?
2. How many are enrolled in the following courses?
 - a. Political Science
 - b. Economics

²³Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 281, 3, 1.

²⁴Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 13. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 1-2.

²⁵Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 1-2, 279, 281. Drewry and Doermann, *Stand and Prosper*, xv, xvi, xxi and xxii.

- c. Psychology
 - d. Sociology
- 3. Have you a woman physician in charge of the health of women students?
- 4. How many women teachers are on your faculty?
 - a. Full professor
 - b. Associate Professor
 - c. Assistant Professor
 - d. Instructor
- 5. Do you have a Women's Self-Government Organization?
- 6. What organizations on your campus give women an opportunity for self-development?²⁶

Slowe also requested the colleges send a "list of your rules governing women students."

Fewer than a quarter, 3,270, of the 14,843 students reported by the 44 responding institutions were studying Political Science (615), Economics (560), Sociology (932), and Psychology (1,163), subjects Slowe considered "fundamental to the understanding of life." She concluded, based on the low numbers, that very few colleges have intentionally set out to "prepare [Black] women for their place in the social order, whether that place be in the home or in the professional or business world." Slowe already saw Black women in new places and understood that a large number studying psychology were "likely training to be teachers."²⁷ Questionnaire responses revealed that less than half the responding colleges (44) gave Black women students an opportunity to participate in self-governance. Only 27 percent (12) had student councils, while almost seven percent (3) had dormitory self-governance and "women's leagues." Based on the survey feedback, Slowe was discouraged by the lack of organizations and opportunities for Black women to govern themselves. It was her belief that self-governance was "the only kind of governance worthwhile in an intelligent community." She viewed this type of participation as "vital to the development of good citizens," as this learning opportunity

²⁶Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," 354.

²⁷Lucy D. Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 15, no. 9 (September 1937): 277. I have not located Slowe's original study and conclusions.

provided “the ability and training to understand the customs and laws by which people are governed,” and was “fundamental to all participation in the activities of the world.”²⁸

In her 1933 *Opportunity* article, Slowe acknowledged that industrialization, the achievement of full citizenship rights, and the ability to participate in civic activities contributed to changing the lives not only of White women, but Black women as well; therefore, their education must prepare them for participatory citizenship. Slowe resolved, “Negro women must be prepared for making their contribution to [solving] the problems of the world.” Further, it was her belief that the college “must provide opportunities not only for her intellectual development, but also for development of her powers of initiative and self-direction.”²⁹ Slowe concluded,

Every college woman has a right to expect her college to fit her to approach these problems in an intelligent manner. Our American life is so organized that there must be more and more group cooperation, as well as an increasing interest on the part of the individual in the welfare of the group. It seems, then, necessary for the college to provide the student with some experience in group living, group cooperation, and group welfare.³⁰

Marion Vera Cuthbert’s 1942 study of 172 college women from 40 communities sought to “discover and describe the situation arising from the marginal life that results from the education of Negro women,” to determine areas “where the greatest problems arise,” and “satisfactory adjustments to be made and compensations to be gained” as this group of Black women completed their college education.³¹ Cuthbert developed a sketch of the sociological picture of a group of college-educated Black women and raised questions to be answered by further research on this population. Her work concluded that

²⁸Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” 355-356.

²⁹ Slowe, “The Colored Girl Enters College,” 276.

³⁰ Ibid., 276.

³¹Marion Vera Cuthbert, *Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Women College Graduate*, (New York: Stratford Press, 1942), xvi. Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” 353-354.

the Negro woman “needs to accept the full implication of leadership which her position assigns to her”; take on the challenge of interracial work to teach White people about “the Negro people,” specifically “sharing a fresh wisdom winnowed from many hard experiences” that would contribute to “our evolving society”; be actively concerned about opportunities for the growth and betterment of “Negro women[‘s] status”; and to free Black citizens “from stereotyped thinking,” and “the white world from stereotypes of the Negro, ... particularly of the Negro woman;” and last, be particularly concerned about “the special social and psychological problems confronting” Black men.³²

Willa Beatrice Player’s research on Black women’s college education at Bennett College focused on assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum from the alumnae and undergraduate perspective. Similar to Slowe and Cuthbert, her research found that alumnae believed more focus was needed to prepare Black women to be participatory citizens and leaders, as well as effective ways to deal with problems in the Black community.³³ Similarly, Noble’s research on Black women’s college education sought to understand the Black woman college graduate’s experiences. Noble’s conclusion was that

³²Cuthbert, *Education and Marginality*, 118-119.

³³Brown, *The Long Walk*, 60. Willa B. Player, “Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College for Women: A Report of a Type A Project,” (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), iv, 41, 39. Three hundred seventeen surveys were returned to the College (65%). Alumnae respondents were between the ages of 19 and 35, and had been out of the college between one and eleven years. Seventy-two percent lived in towns with populations between 5,000 and 25, 000. Forty-five percent were married, five percent were widowed, and three percent divorced; and thirteen percent had children. Eighty-six percent worked either full- or part-time, with only five percent unemployed. More than eighty percent of the employed worked as teachers. Percentages were: Community Leadership and Citizenship (81.9); Earning a living (81.9); General Negro Problems (79.7); Consumer Education (79.5); Home and Family Life (78.5); Mental and Physical Health (77.4) and Communication (76.9). The remaining two were recreation (72), and Religion and Philosophy of Living (68.3). Player, “Improving College Education,” 178, 179, and 185. The 374 responses from approximately 390 undergraduates represented a 96 percent participation rate. Undergraduate respondents were between the ages of 15 and 23, had little to no out-of-school experience, and had not worked outside the home. Half the undergraduates were from towns, 46 percent from urban cities, and 11 percent from farms. Undergraduates rated that Earning a Living, General Negro Problems, and Home and Family Life needed more emphasis in the curriculum, with each rating above 70%. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 153.

Black women felt that the result of a good education should “be a moral outcome.” The result of their education would lead to the development of “integrity and strength of conviction.” For Black women, colleges were to “seek ways of cultivating the seeds of self-reliance and self-expression.” This belief is similar to Slowe’s ideas about Black women’s education expressed in the 1930s – that education would provide the student with “courage and spontaneity to face the choosing of an occupation,” an occupation of her choosing and not one that was expected of, or prescribed based on her gender, race, or community need. The final outcome of Black women’s college education should be a strengthening of the students’

freedom to become what she is willing and able to become. It would include a daring to dream as well as to labor, a daring to pursue as well as to conform, a daring to love, above all else to be true to herself, or to strive to realize what trueness to self could mean, what it will involve and what it will cost.³⁴

Schools created for Black women were criticized for the type of education provided during the early twentieth century. Although Bennett College began assessing its curricular offerings and offered a liberal arts curriculum by the 1940s, it was said that women’s HBCUs lacked a classical curriculum and provided an education designed only to meet students’ “practical needs,” “prepare them to be homemakers,” or “for the teaching profession only,” where few would ever have the opportunity to ascend to positions that would ultimately affect education policy – a role that would prove significant as Black women’s behavior was governed and restricted by numerous institution-imposed rules. Bennett College’s interpretation and application of “practical” appears to have significantly differed from that of other HBCUs, as it sought to prepare its students for “survival, leadership, and a quality of life in a hostile environment.” It

³⁴Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” 352-358. Noble, “The Negro Woman’s College Education,” 1-3, 137-139, 141.

also strove to provide students with “encouragement, learning experiences and [the] moral stamina” they would need to face the times in which they lived.³⁵

As early as 1916, just over fifty years after the Civil War ended, Thomas Jesse Jones reported in the Bureau of Education’s Bulletin 1916 No. 38, *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*, that “no type of education is more eagerly sought after by the colored people than college education.” This statement references a “time when education was denied to black folk,” and that denial placed a premium on its attainment.³⁶ The reverence for formal education among America’s Black citizens stemmed from the “long period of denial to learning.” That long period was slavery; after emancipation, the newly freedmen “absorbed the learning with understanding,” demonstrating their ability to assimilate into American culture as well as demonstrating Blacks’ ability to achieve. The new citizens believed that to be accepted in American society, they needed to prove that “what [education] was good enough for white [citizens] was also good enough” for them. Studying and excelling with the same curriculum showed they too could “absorb the classical kind of education” as well as America’s White citizens, making them intellectual equals; they believed full citizenship and equality would soon follow. The same situation was true in regard to educating women using the same curricula as those offered to men.³⁷ To the newly

³⁵Collier-Thomas, “The Impact of Black Women in Education,” 173-180. Bell-Scott, “Black Women’s Higher Education,” 9 - 10. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 93, 158.

³⁶Cuthbert, “Education and Marginality,” 14. Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States, Volume I* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), 55.

³⁷Jeanne Noble, “The Negro Woman’s College Education,” 21. Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott and Flora J. Hatley. *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*. (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 95.

freedmen, education was perceived “as a strategy for liberation.” Full liberation, in their view, encompassed women’s access as well as men’s access to education, because³⁸

as one rises, all must rise, and as one falls, all must fall. Having our feet on the rock of freedom, we must drag our brethren from the slimy depths of slavery, ignorance, and ruin. Every one of us should be ashamed to consider himself free, while his brother is a slave.³⁹

Women made up nearly half of the four million people freed in 1865 after the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified. There were distinguishing factors that set Black women’s pursuit of education apart from her “White sisters.” While the home was still considered women’s sphere – her place – in society, this was not the same in the case of the Black woman. In the “South ... white woman’s sphere was the home,” and the general belief was that White men were “taught by experience ... to appreciate and reverence the nobleness, the purity, the gentleness of woman and accorded her the unstinted and sincere homage she deserved.” However, due to their prior status as enslaved persons, Black women were not afforded the same level of respect and honor as their White sisters. Slavery contributed to the belief that the homes of Black families were disorganized.⁴⁰

Black women lacked control of their own person, and White men frequently used Black women’s bodies for their nonconsensual physical pleasure. Black women’s submission was portrayed and understood as evidence of their lack of morals and propriety, a fact that figured heavily into their treatment on college campuses, and in the curricular offerings at colleges for them. As a result of these factors, Black women’s roles in American society were classified as “undignified and subservient” by White America. Despite this, within the Black community, Black women wielded power, commanded

³⁸Perkins, “The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century,” 67.

³⁹Ibid., 67.

⁴⁰Noble, *The Negro Woman’s College Education*, 14-15.

respect, and were the social equal of Black men. This dichotomy between Black and White women's role and place reveals how American society degraded Black women; the degradation stood in stark contrast to society's "elevation of white womanhood." This paradox also helps explain how Black families developed a "matriarchal family system" in contrast to the "patriarchal system" characteristic of White American society. Because of this history, when Black women began to pursue higher education, they started "on a different footing from that of [their] white sisters."⁴¹

For Black women, "race uplift" became their priority after the Civil War.⁴² When applied to education, Black women were to employ the "race uplift" philosophy "to advance the educational goals of the race by teaching the young, and also 'lift[ing] up' the moral character of the race by demonstrating sexual virtue."⁴³ Spelman College, the only other HBCU for women, was the first institution to declare that it would offer an academic curriculum for its students. The college's founders believed that its Black women students "should be trained to teach in order to lift the masses of their people and to become excellent homemakers for their husbands and children."⁴⁴ They believed that educated Black women were necessary for the uplifting of the race; and that they were needed as "teachers of small children," in addition to "all levels [of education], including high school, the academy, and the college."⁴⁵

⁴¹Ibid., 16. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 189-190, 202.

⁴²Perkins, "The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century," 74.

⁴³Jeanne L. Noble, "The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century," in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke Sesquicentennial Symposia*, eds. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 90-91.

⁴⁴Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, 22.

⁴⁵Ibid., 87.

Their niche was to be “youth and women,” as it was still reflective of women’s sphere, yet their work was in fact public-facing in its effect because it addressed community needs. Therefore, by the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of “woman’s sphere” began to conflict with “race uplift” ideology, as the uplift work took Black women outside of the private “women’s sphere” and into men’s public sphere as they advocated for services to benefit the race as a whole. Race uplift was viewed as the primary purpose of education for women and gave them an individual “sense of mission”; Black women were also pushed forward in their education pursuits by the “practical necessity” of preparing themselves for the workforce and finding a job that paid a salary that would enable them to be self-sufficient.⁴⁶ Historically, more Black women than White women have worked to support themselves and their families.⁴⁷ For Black women, “the ... occupation situation in the South” limited their work options. The economic ladder, for Black women, had as its “first rung ‘taking in washing and ironing’ or ‘working in white folks’ homes,’” and as a next rung, “teaching school.” White collar jobs, including “secretarial work or clerking in a store,” were closed to Black women because of their race.⁴⁸

Noble argues that “early generations had a strong ‘historic memory’ of black people’s plight and the racial obligations to be shouldered as college educated blacks”; therefore, they adhered to Booker T. Washington’s mantra: “Lift as you Climb.” While Black citizens viewed “education as ‘uplifting,’” most White citizens viewed the education of Black citizens as a threat to “the white position of dominance.” Despite the need for Black women’s education, objections came from some families, Black men, and White citizens. The underlying assumption was that Black women lacked the “intellectual

⁴⁶Ibid., 87.

⁴⁷Ibid., 31.

⁴⁸Noble, “The Negro Woman’s College Education,” 30.

prowess” to complete a collegiate course of study. Specifically these critics intimated that being an educated and participatory citizen was not a role White America envisioned for the Black woman because of their race and gender. In addition to those outside the Black community, some families expressed concern that Black women would be “unfitted to do their work in the home if they studied Latin, Greek, and higher mathematics” – an argument similar to that used against educating Black citizens in the South.⁴⁹ It seems that few of the critics of Black women’s education saw value in their being educated “for self-fulfillment, and few envisioned the need for them to be trained for jobs” or careers. Educator Lucy Laney argued in defense of Black women’s education, noting that the educated

Negro woman, the woman of character and culture is ... needed in the schoolroom, not only in the kindergarten ... but in the academy and the college ... as a public lecturer she may give advice, helpful suggestions and important knowledge that will change a whole community and start its people on the upward way.⁵⁰

While many debated the merits of Black women’s education, the role of Black women in American society was shifting. That shift had an undue influence on the education provided to them on college campuses. Black women “played an equal if not dominant role in the slave culture”; however, their extant education history showed “no evidence that [they] had such a role at any point.” The one role that interjected itself onto the provision of black women’s higher education history was “the one role of her past ... related to her foremother’s role as concubine.” “Negro woman carried not only the stigma of being a Negro but also a new sense of inferiority of being a woman.” In this type of atmosphere, college administrators prescribed “a rigid moralistic curriculum,” which involved the institution of “rules and regulations” presumably “predicated on reasons

⁴⁹Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 40.

⁵⁰Noble, “The Negro Woman’s College Education,” 23-24.

relating to her foremother's sex role as a slave." Administrators seem to have expected that "overnight," Black women were to live in a manner that "the sins of her foremother's might be blotted out." The educational philosophy under which these women pursued their higher education "implied that she was weak and immoral and that at best she could be made fit to rear her children and keep house for her husband."⁵¹

Despite many skeptics, Black women were encouraged to seek an education "for the good of the race" by some members of the Black community. However, Black male educational leaders advocated that their education be "different." Recommendations for their curriculum centered on "moral and Christian education." While moral education was a concern that frequently found its way into the discussions of all women's education, Black men were particularly sensitive to the history of "sexual abuse" Black women had endured at the hands of "White men during slavery and Reconstruction." In an effort to protect future generations of "Black women from their basic instincts," Black men expressed their "abhorrence of concubinage relationships between White men and Black women." It was to serve as a precaution against future temptations for "generations of Black women" on college campuses.⁵²

The Purpose of Educating Black Women

And so with the courage of the great masses, and the example of the distinguished to uphold her, the young Negro woman turns her face to the future. She toils in the field, she works in the factory, she performs innumerable personal services, she teaches school and directs programs of social service. She does what she can to earn a living; she learns what can be learned from the natural contacts which she has with our amazingly complex and changing civilization; and reaching out for greater understanding, greater self expression, she goes, by the thousands now to college.⁵³

⁵¹Noble, "The Negro Woman's College Education," 24.

⁵²Noble, "The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century," 90-91.

⁵³Cuthbert, "Education and Marginality," 10.

With this understanding of the social context in which Black women were educated in the early decades of the twentieth century and the roles they were expected to fill, I examine the purpose for which Black women were to be educated. Cuthbert found that higher education isolates “all Negroes” because the “college training and experience” serves to separate them from “the whole Negro group.”⁵⁴ This led to her theory of marginality of the college-educated Black women.

Black women, fueled by the belief that “they had not reaped sufficient benefits in education or employment during Reconstruction,” pushed for schools catering to their needs after the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁵ The ability for a family to send a daughter to college was viewed as a “mark of prestige.” That prestige resulted either because of the family’s ability, having the financial resources, to do so; or “the envisaged hope” that upon her return, the daughter would share with her family and community the “ideas and ways of living” learned at college and thereby contribute to improving the community at large. Sending a daughter off to college was also seen as a “safe shelter,” because she would be kept away from “undesirable surroundings.”⁵⁶

Black men had divided perspectives on Black women’s education along the race and gender line. They appeared indecisive due to the desire for the Black community to emulate the Cult of True Womanhood, which praised a woman’s role in the home caring for her family, restricting Black women to what was traditionally considered women’s sphere, versus the pressing need for them to become teachers in schools. As educational requirements for teachers rose over time, this meant Black women needed to be educated if they were to become teachers. North Carolina, by the 1930s, required primary school

⁵⁴Ibid., xv.

⁵⁵Perkins, “The Education of Black women in the Nineteenth Century,” 80.

⁵⁶Cuthbert, “Education and Marginality,” 18. Noble, “The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century,” 94.

teachers to have completed two years of normal school, and high school teachers to have a college degree.⁵⁷ Thomas Baker captured the dichotomous sentiment of “most leading male educators” on the education of Black women in his 1906 remarks:⁵⁸

She must not be educated away from being a mother; slave days degraded [black] motherhood and made merchandise out of it. The race is dependent on her giving her best to her children.... She needs, for the sake of the race to be better educated than them [sic] Mothers of men should be superior in order to rear superior men.... Her education should be rooted in Christian education.⁵⁹

This quote is analogous to the notion of Republican Motherhood as a justification for women’s education in the nineteenth century. The “better education” to which he referred pointed toward concerns about morality with an “emphasis on proper sexual mores.” Despite this view, there were educators who believed the education environment for Black male and female students was “oppressive,” indicating that the “prisonlike discipline” students experienced on campus “interfered with the development of intellectual faculties.” Still, at most HBCUS, there was evidence that Black women were “rigidly overprotected by rules and regulations governing their moral behavior.” There were exacting rules that required attendance in chapel services, and enrollment in Bible classes was a requirement of HBCU curricula into the 1950s. Rules governing the behavior of Black men and White women were not so rigidly prescribed.

Despite the fact that colleges enrolling Black women students continued to institute and enforce their moralistic rules, some administrators fought against this practice that focused intense scrutiny on Black women’s “sexual behavior,” and personal habits. Lucy Diggs Slowe was an early proponent of changing the curricular requirements and codes of conduct that affected Black women on college campuses. Slowe felt it was necessary

⁵⁷*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, (Greensboro, N.C., September 1926), 15.

⁵⁸Noble, “The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century,” 92.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 92.

to focus on the “kind of education black women needed in order to function adequately and realistically in their communities.” Slowe believed more women must pursue subjects dealing with community life if they are to be “intelligent members of their communities.” She pointed to supplementing the classical curriculum with social science courses that would “enable one to understand the world in which one lives.” She understood at a micro and macro level that the ability of Black women to “take their place as leaders in their communities” would depend on her ability to exercise “initiative, independence, and self-direction while in college.” She also believed that the need to shield and protect Black women, which delved into the “the most intimate phases of their lives,”⁶⁰ was no longer relevant – a sentiment close to Noble’s belief that

college women must be trained along the line of their individual talents and at the same time they must be conscious of the fact that the world will expect from them practically the same sort of contribution of an individual so disciplined that she can direct herself and [be] so informed that she can assist in directing others in the intricate modern world. Institutions of higher learning must furnish the world this type of individual.⁶¹

Life on Bennett’s campus, like that at other women’s HBCUs, was managed by rules. Religion was an integral part of the campus life at Black colleges.⁶² In addition to mandatory chapel and church attendance on these campuses, colleges had a prescribed set of rules put in place by well-meaning administrators who took their *in loco parentis* responsibilities seriously. Bennett’s *in loco parentis* policy stated, “Every precaution will be taken to give the young women who attend Bennett College for Women home-like protection.” Students were advised not to enroll at Bennett if they could not “cheerfully be governed by the rules of the college.”⁶³ Among the regulations governing the young

⁶⁰Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” 355.

⁶¹Noble, “The Higher Education of Black Women in the Twentieth Century,” 93.

⁶²McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 135.

⁶³Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 246,

women's lives on campus were evening curfews; room inspections; restrictions on male visitation, and trips into the city, and to other local campuses; restrictions on smoking; and the required observance of quiet hours and "lights out." Students were required to be dressed properly to attend class and for all meals taken in the dining halls; obtain written approval to ride in cars other than their parents'; and to sign in and out of their dormitories. In addition to the above, chaperones were required when students were allowed to go into town to attend dances or movies, and during "calling hours."⁶⁴

Regulations not only applied to students' conduct on and off campus, but also to their mode of dress. Bennett's dress code allowed for "slacks" to be worn for "half a day on Saturday"; shorts could be worn "on hikes, for field and recreational activities or for special work in building scenery."⁶⁵ The College warned students against "elaborate and expensive wardrobes," as they were not considered "appropriate for school," nor did these types of clothing fit in with the "ideals of the college." Bennett sought to instill in their students the notion that "the well-dressed woman is one whose clothing is selected with care and thought as to its style and material." Excessive jewelry was also to be avoided by "the cultured and virtuous." The message was clear: "good taste and judgment" were to guide a woman's deportment.⁶⁶ It was a tradition for young women at Bennett to "wear hats, gloves and take purses to the Sunday Vesper service;" and to "dress appropriately for all occasions ... stockings or socks are to [be] worn on all

⁶⁴Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College, 1953-1976* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), 20-21. Howard Zinn, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of our Times*, (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2002), 18-19. Francis D. Graham and Susan L. Poulson, "Spelman College," in *Challenged by Coeducation: Women's Colleges Since the 1960s*, eds. Leslie Miller Mernal and Susan L. Poulson, (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 239-240. Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 15-16. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 142.

⁶⁵Brown, *The Long Walk*, 143, 263.

⁶⁶McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 133.

occasions.”⁶⁷ Here the message was that “simplicity is the guide to gracious living,” and that the students should carefully plan and choose clothing that was flattering for them individually.⁶⁸

These stern and restrictive rules were enacted to guard against “stories of the sexually free black woman and worse, the pregnant, unmarried black girl.”⁶⁹ Administrators were attempting to foster “a middle-class sensibility” with these rules.⁷⁰ One Bennett alumna recalled, “A lot of this had to do with racism and protection. It was probably pretty wise up until the civil rights movement to do that because Black women were vulnerable and we walked to town, remember.”⁷¹ Similarly, another Bennett alumna noted that administrators wanted students to “look like somebody ... like a lady ... all that was so that you would not be considered somebody’s maid.”⁷²

Bennett’s students aspired to an Ideal. That Ideal focused the individual student on “doing good works,” and “living out ... Christian ideals in a self-sacrificing way.” It represented “polish ... excellence ... skill and ... a positive attitude.” The Bennett Girl was “vital, energetic and through it all sweet tempered.” Bennett, like Spelman, was described as a finishing school, with the attendant connotations of being a place to “find a husband,” and lacking “depth ... [and] intellectual rigor.” Bennett provided students with the “encouragement, learning experiences and moral stamina that were necessary to ascertain what the evils [of the world] were and thus to have courage to act.” Its finishing school image and well-dressed students did not preclude the college from inspiring

⁶⁷Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 263.

⁶⁸Ibid., 265.

⁶⁹Zinn, *You Cant be Neutral*, 18-19.

⁷⁰Graham and Poulson, “Spelman College,” 240.

⁷¹Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 251.

⁷²Ibid., 268-269.

activist ideals in its students. Bennett's Belles were encouraged to express themselves and expected to be properly dressed, even while participating in protest activities.⁷³

The presence of these rules on campus was an outgrowth of what historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham calls the "politics of respectability." The phrase was used to describe the Progressive Era work of the Black Baptist Church's Women's Convention. The Politics of Respectability was linked to the notions of racial uplift or "uplift politics" and focused attention on Blacks' behavior, ensuring that it conformed to cultural and socially acceptable norms situated at the "juncture of public and private." It grew in importance as both Black and White women "entered public spaces" and was frequently used to breakdown the "rigidly scientific nature of racial categories" that linked "worthiness for respect to sexual propriety, behavioral decorum, and neatness." The politics of respectability "served a gatekeeping function, establishing a behavioral 'entrance fee,' to the right to respect and the right to full citizenship."⁷⁴

Student Protest and Activism at HBCUs

As a group of women in college, Bennett's students were aware the injustices in American society. They were politically conscious; this consciousness stemmed from an awareness of public issues and was essential for activism to occur. Its presence among this student population signifies that Black students were engaged with the day-to-day occurrences of life for themselves and their fellow citizens, as well as the impact laws, social mores, and customs had on limiting or advancing their opportunities as American citizens. Activism is any activity in which people engage to change perceived injustice in

⁷³Mary Anne Guitart, "Bennett's Proper Pickets: Negro College Girls Must be Tough Fighters on the Picket Line, Young Ladies at Home," *Mademoiselle Magazine* 61, no. 6 (June 1965).

⁷⁴Paisley Harris, "Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women's History and Black Feminism," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 212-238.

society. Most often the protest and activism in which Black students at HBCUs engaged was aimed at off-campus institutions and issues that impacted the ability of Black Americans to exercise their rights as American citizens. This was also the case with Bennett's students.⁷⁵

In the United States, the origin of student protest activity is identified as the early twentieth century when the country became caught up with a "craze for youth organizations." A number of Progressive Era youth organizations were created and became important for university student movements because they "contextualized" and "normalized," for the general public, organized group activities for youth. These organizations prepared youth for working with student organizations when they entered college. American college students began organizing in the 1920s and 1930s. During the Great Depression, students protested for "general economic and social reforms," and even took their protest efforts to the White House in 1937, the year before Bennett's students organized their movie theatre boycott. At the White House, they demonstrated for three days to bring national attention to the plight of impoverished youth. National student organizations communicated and organized protest activity on a regular basis. The American Student Union (ASU) was involved with Bennett's students in organizing the 1938 movie theater boycott, and another organization, the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC), was also involved with Bennett's students' protest activity. Protest activity between 1940 and 1959 was fairly negligible, as antiwar pacifist organizations created in the 1930s began to disappear and were replaced with pro-war, anti-communist

⁷⁵Phillip G. Altbach, *Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States*, (St. Louis, Mo.: United Ministries in Higher Education, 1968), 6, 8, 12. Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*, (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press), 6. Boren, *Student Resistance*, 112. James Alford, *For Alma Mater: Fighting for Change at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 2013), accessed March 22, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/1364612106/fulltextPDF/6E89FB902C3E4145PQ/1?accountid=14258>.

organizations, and others that fought for civil rights, and academic freedom, in addition to taking stances against racism and sexism.⁷⁶

Black students participated in protest and activism at HBCUs and PWIs. These actions had their origin in the New Negro Campus Movement (NNCM), part of the Long Black Student Movement (LBSM). The LBSM, similar to the CRM, began before its manifestation was visible and acknowledged on a large scale. Occurring on different college campuses over the course of a century, Black students' protests were scattered and disconnected. Black students' participation in activism dated back to the late nineteenth century prior to the "the appearance of the New Negro on campus in 1919." Early activities consisted of "antebellum abolitionist and colonization movements." However, due to the low numbers of Black students on college campuses, activities were often restricted to "fiery speeches." Viewed collectively, these activities comprised the LBSM and focused "on accruing off-campus civil rights" between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s. During the late nineteenth century, protests at HBCUs were directed at curricular offerings at Howard University (Howard), and campus life issues at Barber Scotia College (BSC). In the early twentieth century, students on HBCU campuses protested issues ranging from off-campus segregation at Shorter and Talladega Colleges, while Howard students agitated for women's suffrage and against lynching. On-campus issues included the appointment of a Black president as well as a Black Dean of Women

⁷⁶Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 855. Boren, *Student Resistance*, 1, 2, 4, 8-21, 57-121. Student organizations formed between 1920 and 1939 include: National Student Forum (NSF), National Student Federation (NSF), National Student League (NSL), Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), American Student Union (ASU), American Youth Congress (AYC), Southern Negro Youth Conference (SNYC). Student organizations formed between 1940 and 1959 include: Student Defenders of Democracy (SDD), Student League of America (SLA), United States Student Assembly (USSA), Socialist Youth league (SYL), Young Progressives of America (YPA), Labor Youth League (LYL), United World Federalists (UWF), American Association of University Students for Academic Freedom (AAUSAF), National Student Association (NSA), Students for Democratic Action (SDA), SANE, SLATE, Student Peace Union (SPU), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Youth organizations created included Woodcraft Indians, Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 51-52.

at Howard; fighting against required Saturday school classes at NCA&T, and changes to students' scheduled dating time at Wilberforce College.⁷⁷

The most striking protests on HBCU campuses occurred in the 1920s when students at six HBCUs – Fisk, Howard, Tuskegee, Hampton, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical, and Lincoln – protested continued selection of, and leadership by, White presidents. The reasons students sought the ouster of these presidents included the belief that after fifty years of freedom, there were enough educated Blacks to assume leadership roles at HBCUs. Students harbored resentment toward the White paternalism that pervaded HBCU campuses and their administration. Students questioned the divergent ideologies that fought for prominence in the provision of education to America's Black citizens. The ideologies included the provision of the classical curriculum, which was thought to be the civilizing force among America's White citizens, versus the provision of rudimentary vocational education, which was believed best suited to the "menial roles" Blacks were expected to fill in the United States. Bennett's students' 1938 protest places their protest activity along this continuum of Black students' engagement in protest and activism and serves as an entry point for the study of their students' efforts to end segregation in Greensboro and the United States from the mid-1950s through the 1960s. Students recognized the discordant discourse about the status of race relations and their social reality. Protest participants were knowledgeable of their social condition and prepared to be active agents for change in their own fight for freedom, citizenship rights,

⁷⁷Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 29, 30-34. "Howard University Students Picket National Crime Conference in D.C.," International News Press, Inc., December 1934, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, included in *One Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North*, exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY April 3-September 7, 2015.

and recognition of their humanity long before the modern Civil Rights Movement is acknowledged to have begun.⁷⁸

There is no shortage of literature documenting and analyzing student protest and activism during the 1950s and 1960s. However, if one looks for literature that documents the involvement and participation of women, researchers would have to look for literature written more recently, like Olson's *Freedom's Daughters*, Ling and Monteith's *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, Brown's *Belles of Liberty*, and Lefever's *Undaunted by the Fight*. Few focus on accounts of student protest and activism on an individual level like Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Gault's *In My Place*, and Motley's *Equal Justice Under the Law*. Even these do not focus on one institution. What seems most prevalent, in the last twenty years, is biography and autobiography of key and well-known figures as well as composite monographs providing a sketch of several women and their particular involvement or contribution. A researcher has to search these texts carefully to piece together a composite list of activities women students engaged in at a particular time.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), vii and 3. Lorraine Ahearn, "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938," in *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*, ed. Naeemah Clark, 89-107. William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 51. Drewry and Doermann, *Stand and Prosper*, 70-98. James Alford, *For Alma Mater: Fighting for Change at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 2013), accessed March 22, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/1364612106/fulltextPDF/6E89FB902C3E4145PQ/1?accountid=14258>.

⁷⁹Books on student protest and activism during the CRM include: DeGroot's *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, Julian Foster and Durward Long's *Protest!: Student Protest and Activism in America*, James McEvoy and Abraham Miller's *Black Power and Student Rebellion*, Edward E. Sampson and Harold Korn's *Student Protest and Activism: Alternatives for Social Change*, and James L. Wood's *The Sources of American Student Activism*. Those that address women's participation include Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830-1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001). Peter Ling and Sharon Monteith, *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil*

Works that include the involvement of women at HBCUs in student protest and activism have been written within the last twenty years. Most references have been included in works that do not focus on Black women as initiators of the actions, or as the central characters in the narrative, such as Chafe's *Civilities and Civil Rights*, Solomon's *In the Company of Educated Women*, Manley's *A Legacy Continues*, McCandless's *The Past in the Present in the Present*, Zinn's *You Can't Be Neutral on Moving Train*, Moss's *Tell me Why Dear Bennett*, or Rogers's *The Black Campus Movement*. Books that solely focus on women students' participation in protest and activism include Brown's *Belles of Liberty* and *The Long Walk*, and Lefever's *Undaunted by the Fight*. In addition, there is one journal article by Ahearn, "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line," which documents Bennett's students' 1938 protest.⁸⁰

Little research has been done on student protest and activism at HBCUs and far less on women's HBCUs. Where it has been included in book length monographs, it is a memoir, or an institutional history written by someone associated with the institution.

Rights Movement, 1957-1967 (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005). Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dell, 1976). Charlayne Hunter Gault, *In my Place* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992). Constance Baker Motley, *Equal Justice Under the Law: An Autobiography of Constance Baker Motley* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

⁸⁰Those that reference the involvement of Bennett College's students include William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1980). Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985). Linda Beatrice Brown, *Belles of Liberty: Gender, Bennett College and the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, North Carolina* (Greensboro, N.C.: Women and Wisdom Press, 2013). Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999). Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of our Times* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2002). Juanita Patience Moss, *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles Class of 1924-2012* (Westminster: Heritage Books, 2010). Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College* (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women's Leadership Institute, 1998). Lorraine Ahearn, "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938," in *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*, Ed. Naeemah Clark, Editor (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

Recent work on student protest and activism calls for more research on HBCUs and the roles they and their students played in protest and activism. It is ironic that one of the most active CRM organizations, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was a student organization created as an outgrowth of the 1960 Sit-In Movement. However, it is recognized far more for its CRM activity that included off-campus pickets, voter education and registration, and sit-ins against establishments and systems that supported Jim Crow than the fact that it was a student established organization, created on the campus of an HBCU. Protests initiated by Southern students' activism cannot be fully understood until HBCU students' contribution to protest activity is included, and the institutions are recognized as "major sources of dissent." This reality runs contrary to the general belief that many HBCUs were "politically repressive, [and] socially conservative." Their inclusion in this discourse will begin to correct "white America's historical memory slights" that have excluded HBCU students' protest activity.⁸¹

With this information, I turn my attention to this question: How did an HBCU for women located in the segregated South incorporate changes to the curriculum and co-curricular activities to produce graduates capable of many of the lofty goals laid out by the leading Black women scholars of the day? An examination of the history of Bennett College, in Chapter III, illustrates how that goal was achieved, and in Chapter IV I turn attention to the work of Bennett College under the sponsorship of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the leadership of David Dallas Jones and Willa Beatrice Player, to

⁸¹Works on Bennett College include *The Long Walk* and *Belles of Liberty*, both written by Bennett College for Women alumna Linda Beatrice Brown ('61) and niece of Willa B. Player. Works on Spelman College include books written by former professor Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight*; memoirs by former professor and historian Howard Zinn, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*, and alumna Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns*, as well as a former president, Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues*. James L. Wood, *Political Consciousness and Student Activism*, (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1974) 6-12. Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White*, 2, 6. SNCC was founded at Shaw University, an HBCU, in April 1960.

explore the strategy employed by the college to actualize the “re-envisioning” of Black women’s role, place, and voice in American society.

Chapter III
A HISTORY OF BENNETT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature of the social environment in the state of North Carolina and the city of Greensboro, where Bennett College is located. It explores the state of race relations between Greensboro and North Carolina's Black and White citizens and the conditions under which each lived in close proximity, yet in far separate states of reality. The discussion reveals how North Carolina's progressive image and Greensboro's commitment to civility negatively impacted the lives of its Black citizens. This environment uniquely shaped Bennett College's growth and development as an institution that first served a coeducational student population, its growth into a coeducational college; its evolution into a junior college, and finally a four-year liberal arts college for Black women.¹

In the following pages, I discuss Bennett's evolution from a day school to a normal school and seminary that initially provided primary and secondary education, as well as religious instruction. Its affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), through the Freedmen's Aid Society (FAS) in 1874, and the Woman's Home Mission Society (MWHMS) in 1886 is discussed. Also addressed is its partnership with the MEC's Board of Education (BOE) and the MWHMS in 1926 as it reorganized as a college for women offering a junior college education before becoming a four-year liberal arts college

¹*Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 1, no. 3. (June, 1927), 4-5.

offering a bachelor's degree. In discussing its evolution to a four-year liberal arts college, I discuss the leadership of its first two presidents, David Dallas Jones (1926-1955) and Willa B. Player (1955-1966). The growth of its early curriculum is highlighted as well as the development of college's physical plant, and its fundraising efforts to support the growth and expansion of the college. Since its founding in 1873, Bennett has served a student body that has always been predominantly Black and provided its students with an education tailored to help them become fully engaged and knowledgeable citizens.² Of its ten presidents, since becoming a college for women in 1926, eight have been women, and all were Black.

North Carolina and Greensboro

Bennett College is located in Greensboro, North Carolina. During the early twentieth century, North Carolina was praised for its progressive outlook and its distinctive pattern of race relations. North Carolina worked to maintain an image of moderation and promoted the view that it was on the move in the direction of racial tolerance.³ Its image, to outside observers, was reported to be an inspiring exception to Southern racism. Greensboro, the seat of Guilford County, was described as “a center of antislavery activity, a way station on the Underground Railroad and a gathering place for Quakers.”⁴ Since the turn of the twentieth century, a commitment to civility was at the core of Greensboro's progressive image. This commitment governed all interactions

²O. Kelly Ingram, *Methodism Alive in North Carolina* (Durham, N.C.: The Divinity School of Duke University, 1976), 125. Kimberly Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148.

³William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8. V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), 205.

⁴Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 17.

between people. It was “the cornerstone of the progressive mystique,” where residents expressed “courtesy [and] concern about an associate’s family, children and health,” and evidenced “a personal grace that smoothe[d] contact with strangers.” Ultimately civility obscured conflict and “made good manners more important than substantial action.”⁵ Civility was the reason why, despite segregation, Jim Crow laws, and continued discrimination, North Carolina and Greensboro were seen as places where relations between the races were good.⁶

Composed mainly of sophisticated men, the state’s White leadership was beholden to interest groups composed of manufacturing and banking leaders. This leadership worked to maintain the image that the state was moderate. Yet, North Carolina’s progressive image contradicted the actual state of affairs. North Carolina’s Black citizens were not able to exercise their right to vote and “constituted a dependent ‘under class,’ yoked to menial service jobs in factories and homes.” Just twenty years before the student-led sit-ins began, North Carolina had “the lowest rate of unionization in the country” and “one of the highest levels of illiteracy in the south.” There were only three states that had a lower per capita income, and North Carolina was near last among all states in average manufacturing wage. This represented a paradox, as Greensboro “combined a reputation for enlightenment and a social reality that was reactionary.”⁷

⁵Ibid., 8. Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 45, 135; Albert E. Manley, *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College, 1953-1976* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), 18.

⁶V. O. Key, *Southern Politics: In State and in Nation* (New York: Vintage Books), 205, 206. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 4.

⁷Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 4-6, 8-9. North Carolina was ranked 45th out of 48 states. Social Explorer – Census 1930 United States, North Carolina, Guilford County T39 – Literacy (Population Age 10 Years And Over). The 1930 Census reported an illiteracy rate for the United States of 4.3, while in North Carolina and Guilford County those rates were 10.1 and 5.1, respectively.

Southern Blacks were described as “creators as well as victims of Southern history.” Greensboro’s Black citizens’ experience with civility was opposite that of its White citizens’ beliefs about race relations in the city. They best understood civility’s other side. They alone, it seems, understood that the “deferential poses” they held were the mask Paul Lawrence Dunbar wrote about in his 1896 poem, “We Wear the Mask.” This mask enabled Southern Black citizens to maintain an acceptable countenance and disposition that ensured their survival in a hostile region of this country where one’s black skin, and a White person’s interpretation of one’s motive or intentions, could result in public humiliation, bodily harm, or death. The poses and their conformity to this ritual were an example of the effects of the chilling power of consensus. Consensus squelched any effort to raise issues of racial justice in the segregated South. Consensus and complicity, in this case, was the affirmation White citizens needed to confirm their belief that there was no racial problem. It fulfilled their need to see Black citizens affirm their position; otherwise, they would suffer repercussions for their disagreement and their attempts to raise awareness of the Country’s race problems. The world in which Black North Carolinians were allowed to live provided “no room for collective self-assertion and independence,” as the rules by which Black citizens lived were made up and enforced by North Carolina’s White citizens.⁸

Despite the surface appearance that there was acceptance of the imposition of civility on Black lives in Greensboro and North Carolina’s Black communities, the intended recipients did not accept the White-imposed version of reality. Gathering places within Greensboro’s Black community, like churches, schools, pool halls, and corners, presented opportunities for Black citizens to express their true feelings and frustrations with the status of race relations in the city and state. In these spaces and places, Black citizens voiced a need for change, which resulted in a list of concrete demands that

⁸Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 8-9.

included “better job opportunities, decent housing, good police protection provided by black officers, [and] quality textbooks and equipment for schools.” These demands ran contrary to what North Carolina’s White citizens believed about its Black citizens’ wants and desires. Black citizens’ demands “reflected an incipient rebellion [which was] no less powerful for not being able to find open expression.”⁹

North Carolina’s progressives believed its Black citizens were satisfied with their place in North Carolina society. They also believed that “good race relations” existed between its Black and White citizens. Often they misunderstood Black avoidance of Jim Crow situations because Black citizens secured other methods to achieve their needs. For instance, walking instead of taking public transportation, catching a ride, or driving one’s own car was viewed by White citizens as a choice, rather than a necessity, or a way for Black citizens to protect their personal pride and dignity. Greensboro’s White citizens could not envision the lessons being taught in the midst of their Southern utopia on the Bennett College campus. They did not realize the depth of President David Dallas Jones’s commitment to improving his hometown’s Black community. Nor could they imagine the ideals being instilled in the minds of Black college women on Bennett’s campus under the direction of Jones and Player.¹⁰

Greensboro’s form of White progressivism encompassed an “abhorrence of personal conflict, courtesy toward new ideas and a generosity toward those less fortunate than oneself.” Because of this, the state was viewed as a “model community in its race relations, ‘something of a living answer to the riddle of race.’” Although Greensboro’s Black citizens were not treated as harshly as Black citizens in other Southern cities and states, their treatment at the hands of its White citizens belied the true state of their

⁹Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 8-9. “City To Hire Negro Officers,” Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – Clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹⁰Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 8-9.

existence in this progressive city and state. While there had been “no violent outbursts by citizens repressed beyond endurance” in the state, North Carolina’s progressive image and Greensboro’s civility did little to quell the discontent of Greensboro’s Black citizens.¹¹

North Carolina reportedly showed a “consistently sensitive appreciation of Negro rights.” It was one of the few states that did not secede from the Union in 1861, deciding to do so only after its Northern and Southern neighbors, Virginia and South Carolina. It was also the state where, two years after the Wilmington Race Riot, Charles Brantley Aycock, recognized by many as the education governor, approved the legislature’s 1900 recommendation to institute a literacy requirement for voting. The effect of this voter-approved legislation was that both illiterate Blacks and Whites were disfranchised. However, White citizens’ right to vote was largely restored by a temporary Grandfather Clause. Aycock felt

that the time had come when the negro (sic) should be taught to realize that while he would not be permitted to govern the state, his rights should be more sacred by reason of his weakness. His rights included the right to education along with the white citizenry.¹²

Illiteracy is the weakness to which Aycock referred. The 1900 U.S. Census reported an American illiteracy rate of 8.2 percent. Yet, in North Carolina and in Guilford County, the illiteracy rates were 20.4 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively. When comparing Black and White citizens in the 1900 Census, Black illiteracy rates were higher than those recorded for Whites. It was under Aycock’s leadership that the state “embarked on an ambitious program of educational reform to improve segregated black schools and to promote black self-advancement.” Aycock’s strategy was to improve an already unequal

¹¹Key, *Southern Politics*, 205, 206. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 4.

¹²Key, *Southern Politics In State and Nation*, 206-209. Eric Foner, *Give me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton), 652.

system rather than desegregate schools or provide equal funding or an equal education.¹³ The effects of this legislation are seen in the 1912 assessment of North Carolina's Negro schools by Nathan C. Newbold, a White State Agent for rural schools. He asserted, "The average negro school house is really a disgrace to an independent civilized society," and he conceded that the condition of schools provided for North Carolina's Black citizens exposed "injustice, inhumanity and neglect on the part of white people."¹⁴

At the start of the twentieth century, Greensboro "rejected its egalitarian roots" and moved toward "a system of rigid racial and economic discrimination" against its Black citizens. This retrenchment of Reconstruction's social advancement adversely affected the lives of Black citizens, as jobs were more readily provided to the influx of rural White farmers after Reconstruction and during the Depression years. It was during this nearly 55-year period between 1877 and 1930 that America's Black citizens began to feel the full effects of Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, segregation, lynching, and race riots on their lives. To make employment opportunities available for these migrants, Greensboro's Black citizens were released from skilled labor jobs and replaced by White laborers. This tactic restricted the majority of Greensboro's Black citizens to jobs in the personal and domestic service sector.¹⁵

¹³Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 14, 8, 4. Key, *Southern Politics In State and Nation*, 208-209. John Rodman Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina: Social and Economic* (Raleigh: North Carolina Board of Charities and Public Welfare), 38-39.

¹⁴ Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott and Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 122-123. Clarence Poe was a former editor of *The Progressive Farmer*. Kimberley Johnson, "Reforming Jim Crow: *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age before Brown*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 145. Social Explorer – Census 1900 United States, North Carolina, Guilford County, T25 – Literacy.

¹⁵Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women 1926-1966" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2004), 91, 15, 100-101. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 91. Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina*, 19-22. Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 836.

Leadership in North Carolina's Black community consisted of educators, clergymen, and businessmen. Their primary role was to communicate and maintain a middle-class morality, and a "cultivated cooperation" with Greensboro's White citizens, with an emphasis on character building among Black citizens – or, simply put, to establish and maintain respectability among North Carolina's Black population. Respectability was a middle class notion that dictated one's public and private behavior; it emphasized manners and morals.¹⁶ Leaders like educator James E. Shepard, founder of North Carolina College for Negroes, cautioned North Carolina's Black citizens to refrain from "moving picture shows, ignorance, superstition and the use of cocaine or dope by youth," while others, near the turn of the century, urged Blacks not to abandon the South.¹⁷ To assuage the White population's fears, Raleigh educator, Charles N. Hunter, argued,

There are no negro (sic) anarchists, nihilists, or socialists, there are no dynamiters with their bombs.... [The Negro] is not given to strikes and the wide range of destructive lawlessness that prevailed in the North.... From such menaces the South is practically free.¹⁸

However, in the years preceding America's entry into World War I, there was a noticeable difference in Black North Carolinians' attitudes toward the social situation in which they found themselves. The shift was fueled in part by Clarence Poe's Rural Segregation Plan, which caused Black citizens to become increasingly politically active. The 1913 plan was intended to "establish rural segregation throughout the South." Poe's plan called for rural land in the Southern United States to "be designated for whites or

¹⁶Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham coined the phrase "the politics of respectability" in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*.

¹⁷Crow, Escott and Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 122. North Carolina College for Negroes located in Durham was later renamed North Carolina Central University (NCCU).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 122, 123.

blacks.”¹⁹ This proposal, and its popularity among North Carolina’s White citizens, signaled to Black citizens that improvement in their social condition was not likely in the near future and served to galvanize the community. The state legislature narrowly defeated the Plan in 1915. James Dudley, president of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T), began speaking out in 1914, expressing concern about “poor health conditions in black residential areas,” and “wooden Jim Crow cars on railroads”; others protested the “inadequate schools their children attended.”²⁰

Following World War I, Black citizens in North Carolina expressed their discontent with segregation and discrimination by passing “strongly worded resolutions,” a tactic student protestors of the late nineteenth century used as they protested race-based injustice, which warned North Carolina’s White community that its Black citizens “would not be content to sacrifice their lives in a war for democracy and return to bigotry at home.”²¹ The “New Negro,” Black citizens aware of their citizenship rights and the wrongs of America’s racial caste system, emerged during the 1920s as the result of a confluence of several events. Black World War I veterans expected unhindered exercise of their rights as American citizens after having fought abroad to make the world safe for democracy. There was also a shift in the thinking of Black Americans about their rights as citizens. These two, combined with new ideas emerging from artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance and population shifts from rural to urban communities, allowed a new generation to voice concerns about segregation and demand their rights as American citizens.

Black leaders continued to express discontent and call for change in the racial status quo. In a 1923 Emancipation Day speech, Reverend D. Ormonde Walker “rebuked

¹⁹Ibid., 122.

²⁰Ibid., 122-123. Clarence Poe was a former editor of *The Progressive Farmer*.

²¹Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 95, 111-112.

the Ku Klux Klan” and “upbraided the Republican party for abandoning its founding principles,” while warning North Carolina’s White citizens that “they were no longer dealing with former slaves but rather with a new generation of blacks.” Younger Black citizens questioned Emancipation Day celebrations, noting that its continued observance “was too much of a reminder of slavery,” which they believed Whites used “to justify discrimination.” By 1928, Shaw University professor William S. Turner went farther than Reverend Walker in reinterpreting the intent of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Turner “denied Lincoln’s humanitarian motives and argued that Lincoln issued the proclamation to further the war effort and infuse the Union cause with idealism.” The following year, 1929, the Durham-based, Black-owned and operated newspaper, *The Carolina Times*, contributed to this effort by agitating for the rights legally granted to Blacks by the Reconstruction Amendments. Louis Austin, its editor, linked the struggles of Northern and Southern Blacks, indicating that they both sought “equal justice, opportunity, and political rights,” dispelling the myth that North Carolina’s Blacks “were happy and content,” by noting that “behind the ‘hypocritical smile’ and ‘feigned goodwill’ was a ‘hatred hidden by fawning.’”²²

The twenty-three years between the end of Reconstruction and the turn of the century were a complex time for Black North Carolinians. Before and after segregation and disfranchisement were rigorously enacted, its Black citizens strove to organize, uplift, and diversify their individual work.²³ These years were described as the “nadir,” a period when there was little advancement toward the attainment of equal rights for America’s Black citizens. Elected officials, appointed members of the judiciary, and labor leaders all accepted without question the second-class status thrust upon America’s

²²Crow, Escott and Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 126-127.

²³*Ibid.*, 95.

Black citizens.²⁴ By the 1940s, when compared to other states, only five had a lower per capita income than North Carolina, and the state continued to have high levels of illiteracy when compared to other Southern states. While the illiteracy rate for the U.S. stood at 4.3 percent; in North Carolina and Guilford County the rates were 10.1 and 5.1 percent, respectively. When looking at illiteracy across the races, Black North Carolinians, just as in 1900, had higher rates of illiteracy than their fellow White citizens – 20.6 and 12.7 percent for Blacks in the state and county, respectively, versus 5.6 and 2.9 percent for Whites. North Carolina was also near last among all states “in average manufacturing wage.” The combination of its “reputation for enlightenment” juxtaposed against its “reactionary social reality” reveals the paradoxical state in which North Carolina’s Black citizens lived.²⁵

North Carolina’s Black middle class was primarily located in five of its largest cities – Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, Charlotte, and Winston-Salem. Each city was home to one or more of the state’s eleven HBCUs. Greensboro was home to five colleges: two HBCUs, Bennett College for Women (1926) and NCA&T (1890); and three Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), Greensboro College (1833), Guilford College (1837), and University of North Carolina at Greensboro (1892). These cities experienced increased political activity during the 1930s and happened to have had the majority of North Carolina’s Black voters. Two of the cities – Greensboro and Winston-Salem – “adopted ordinances that established separate residential areas.” The result was that Black citizens were unable to own a “substantial amount of residential property,” that right being reserved for North Carolina’s White citizens. By mid-twentieth century, these

²⁴Ibid., 96.

²⁵Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 95, 111-112. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 4-6. Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina*, 14-17, 35-40. Social Explorer – Census 1930 United States, North Carolina, Guilford County T39 – Literacy (Population Age 10 Years And Over). Social Explorer – Census 1930 United States, North Carolina, Guilford County, T40 Literacy (White Population Age 10 and Over), T41 (Black Population Age 10 and Over).

issues had not abated. The social problems that continued to plague North Carolina and America's Black citizens as a whole included denial of civil rights, poverty, and economic inequality.²⁶

An analysis of 1940 census data shows that North Carolina's Black population had higher birth, sickness, and death rates than their White counterparts. The difference was attributed to the Negro's "standard of living" and "earning capacity," which were "conducive to the Negro being ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-clothed." North Carolina's Black population suffered disproportionately from communicable diseases such as "tuberculosis, malarial fever, syphilis, nephritis and pneumonia." There were also high incidences of heart disease and cancer. Deaths of Black citizens between the ages of 15 and 24 were higher than those for White citizens in the same age cohort. Adding to the health crisis in the Black community was the fact that there were too few medical professionals available to treat Black citizens. In 1940, there was one "Negro physician for every 6,499 persons," and one "Negro dentist to every 13,629 colored persons." There were no "Negro optometrists, chiropractors or veterinarians."²⁷

²⁶Crow, Escott and Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 145, 182. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College and Bennett College are two of 11 HBCUs located in the state. HBCUs in North Carolina include: Shaw College, Raleigh (1865), Barber-Scotia College, Concord (1867), Fayetteville State Teachers College, Fayetteville (1867), Johnson C. Smith College, Charlotte (1867), St. Augustine's College, Raleigh (1867), Bennett College, Greensboro (1873), Livingstone College, Concord (1879), Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City (1891), North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, Greensboro (1892), Winston-Salem College, Winston-Salem (1892), and North Carolina Central, Durham (1910). Five of the colleges were state-supported, and two offered graduate programs in the following fields, agronomy, law, liberal arts, library science, and nursing. Greensboro would not desegregate its schools until 1971.

²⁶Howard E. Covington, *Once Upon a City: Greensboro, North Carolina's Second Century* (Greensboro, N.C.: Greensboro Historical Museum Inc., 2008), 44. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 13, 16.

²⁷Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina*, p. 29 -34. Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 145.

In the years leading up to America's entry into World War II, 84.9 percent of the American population had attained some elementary or high school education, 48.7 percent completed both, while just 10 percent had some or had completed a college degree. Twenty-six percent of housing units had no running water, 17.9 percent were in need of major repairs, and 19.5 percent had no radios, which were the primary means by which citizens received information about international, national, and local events.²⁸ Comparable numbers for North Carolina in the 1940 census showed that 59.9 percent lacked running water, 31.9 percent were in need of major repairs, and 40.2 percent lacked access to radios. In Guilford County, the census data showed that 28.4 percent of housing lacked running water, and 17.2 percent were in need of major repairs, while just 22.7 percent of homes lacked a radio, which was the main means of communication, as President Roosevelt used it during the Depression as a means to reach out to all citizens with his Fireside Chats.²⁹

Census data also reveal that in 1940, North Carolina's 981,298 Black citizens had limited access to recreation facilities and activities. There were 22 public libraries located in 20 counties in which only 433,519 (44 percent) of the state's Black citizens lived. This meant that more than half (56 percent) of North Carolina's Black population lacked freely available access to books in a state where the Black illiteracy rate exceeded that of its White citizens, and in a state where illiteracy was used as a tool to disfranchise its citizens. Recreation for Blacks in the state made its greatest gains with the assistance of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA) programs. By 1943, just five communities

²⁸Social Explorer – Census 1940 Census Tract, County, State and US, T43 - Education, T61 – Housing Conditions – Water Availability, T62 – Housing Conditions – In Need of Repair, and T63 - Radios.

²⁹Social Explorer – Census 1940 Census Tract, County, State and US, T61 – Housing Conditions – Water Availability, T62 – Housing Conditions – In Need of Repair, and T63 – Radios.

provided recreation facilities such as swimming pools and parks that North Carolina's Black citizens could frequent: High Point, Raleigh, Durham, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro; four of the five also happened to be cities with large Black middle class populations and were home to several HBCUs. Local communities continued recreation programs, even after WPA funding ceased. This analysis of the 1940 census shows that North Carolina's Black citizens were concerned about their living conditions – housing, employment, health, and other problems. The prevailing belief was that “the inadequacy of recreational facilities available to the group was responsible for the high rate of crime and juvenile delinquency attributed to the race.” Recreation in this case was viewed as a means to help alleviate many of the vices present among North Carolina's Black population, and to “build character.”³⁰

In May 1954, Greensboro declared that it would be the first Southern city to comply with the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by desegregating its schools. At its meeting on May 18, 1954, the Greensboro School Board, by a vote of six to one, passed a resolution to abide by the Supreme Court's May 17, 1954 decision in the case. The School Board, led by Greensboro School Superintendent, Ben L. Smith, was directed to compile a report on how compliance might be realized. David Dallas Jones was the only Black member of Greensboro's School Board. He believed that by initiating the first steps, Greensboro could set an example for the community, the state, and the South.³¹ By 1960, the year Bennett College and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical (NCA&T) students planned and initiated a sit-in against segregated lunch counters, Greensboro would be considered a city of the “new south ... free of old prejudices and ideally prepared to lead the region toward new levels of prosperity and enlightenment,” even though its Black citizens were still largely

³⁰Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina*, 45-49.

³¹Crow, Escott and Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 171.

disfranchised, lived in poor housing, and were primarily restricted to service employment.³²

In Greensboro, there were a number of urgent needs for its Black citizens. Housing was one of those urgent needs. Houses near the Bennett campus “were small and in poor repair,” streets were not paved, and the neighborhoods in which Black citizens lived “had no representation at city hall to make the case for improvement.” At the same time that Greensboro’s Black citizens dealt with poor housing conditions, the city pursued expansion of White suburbs. Its returning Black veterans were not immune to the stricture imposed on them by virtue of their race, despite the fact that they valiantly served the United States during World War I and World War II. The effort to build “temporary housing” after World War II for veterans resulted in only one-quarter of the homes built in Greensboro being allotted to Black servicemen.³³

It is into this milieu, in 1926, that Bennett College for Women, an institution envisioned and willed into existence by the interest of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s (MEC’s) Board of Education (BOE) and its Woman’s Home Mission Society (MWHMS) entered to provide higher education in a progressive state of the former Confederacy for Black women – women whose role, place, and voice were largely prescribed by their race and prior status as property.

A Day School, a Seminary, a College for Women

The Methodist Episcopal Church displayed an interest in “the education of Negroes” as early as the Colonial Period. Their motivation was religious in nature, and its initial purpose “was to prepare Negroes for church membership and to enable them to

³²Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 6.

³³Covington, *Once Upon a City*, 44. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 16.

read the bible.” The Methodist Church played a significant role in the Abolitionist Movement, and its support of the Movement caused “major divisions” within the church. In 1844, the Methodist Church split into North and South as the country would split into Union and Confederate states, twenty years later, during the Civil War. In the years preceding the war, the Methodist Episcopal Church had “more than 300 workers in the Southern field,” with many remaining in the South after the war ended. Prior to federal government action, numerous religious denominations worked throughout the South “ministering to the needs of the Freedmen.” This work, in many instances, began before the Civil War ended. Subsequently, the Methodist Episcopal Church withdrew its support from the Federal Government’s Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedman’s Bureau), choosing instead to “set up its own society within the Methodist Church.” While the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation had “removed the shackles of slavery from the hands and feet of the Negroes;” the Methodist Episcopal Church worked with the freedmen to “give relief and provide education to free their minds and spirits.”³⁴

In the aftermath of the Civil War, a few hundred schools were created to provide education to the formerly enslaved. Bennett College was one of those schools. Its beginning was in 1865, the year the Civil War ended and the 13th Amendment was ratified granting citizenship to the formerly enslaved. Its first home was on the West Green property of North Carolina lawyer, politician, and Civil War veteran, Albion W. Tourgee. That same year, the federal government created the Freedman’s Bureau to assist the formerly enslaved during Reconstruction, a time when America attempted to reunite the Union and Confederate states as one country, and to change the social structure of the former Confederacy. The following year, 1866, the Methodist Episcopal Church created

³⁴James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage Freedom and Education of Black People* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 55-56, 63.

its Freedmen's Aid Society (FAS). At this early stage, the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church exhibited an interest in the work of the Freedmen's Aid Society, believing that "women as a group should become involved in this or a similar enterprise." However, the Act of Incorporation of the Freedmen's Aid Society limited membership to males. Therefore, Methodist women were unable to participate in the Freedmen's Aid Society's work.³⁵

Albion Tourgee's wife, Emma, along with members of her family, alternated teaching duties at the school on their property until 1867, when it moved.³⁶ The basement of Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church became its new home, and the school's main purpose was to "train teachers and ministers."³⁷ Officially established on August 1, 1873 as a coeducational day school with 70 elementary and secondary students, it became affiliated with the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1874.³⁸ In 1875, emancipated slaves and the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church collaborated to purchase twenty acres of land, for a sum of \$2,200.³⁹ That same year, the women of the Methodist Episcopal

³⁵Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 123-125. NCUMHE, *To Give the Key of Knowledge*, 15; Ingram, *Methodism Alive*, 88. The FAS was the MEC agency created to address the vocational, educational, and religious needs of freed Blacks. Because of the Church's close identification with the emancipation movement and its role as a leader in the education of Black citizens after the Civil War, it was frequently referred to as "the niggers church" due to its close association with "the condition of oppressed people and its early witness against slavery."

³⁶Mark Elliott, *Color Blind Justice: Albion Tourgee and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 126.

³⁷Elliott, *Color Blind Justice*, 126. Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church is now St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 155-157. Willa Player, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project" (Ed.D. diss. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 1.

³⁸Player, "Improving College Education," 12.

³⁹Virginia Ann Sutton, "The Early History of Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina" (Master's thesis, Wake Forest University, 1969), 27.

Church appointed a committee “to petition the Freedmen’s Aid Society, urging selection of women as members of its Board of Managers.” It was now, nine years into the work of the Freedmen’s Aid Society, that the male membership of the Society recognized a “need of the [type of] work contemplated by women and gave them every encouragement.” It was an additional two years before the Freedmen’s Aid Society recognized a specific weakness, “the absence of cooperating home influences,” that the Church’s women were uniquely qualified to address. The focus for the women’s work would be to improve “the conditions of the homes of the freed people”; this meant focusing on the women in the home, allowing an opportunity for the Methodist churchwomen to work with the Freedmen’s Aid Society within women’s designated sphere, the home.⁴⁰

By 1878, the school moved to its new property.⁴¹ The land allowed the day school to attain a good “physical plant and modest endowment.”⁴² Its new location was described as “the highest point of land near Greensboro, it was within one mile of the center [of town],” and it commanded a “fine view of the whole region.” In this same year, a Troy, New York businessman, Lyman Bennett, donated \$10,000 for construction of the first building on campus, Bennett Hall, and donated a bell to the college with an inscription from the book of Isaiah 61:1. It read, “Proclaim liberty to the captives, and the

⁴⁰Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 123-125.

⁴¹Ingram, *Methodism Alive*, 126. Player, “Improving College Education,” 1. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 12-13. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 155-157. Reports on the funding provided to purchase the land differ based on the source. Benjamin P. Brawley indicates in *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern* that the land was purchased with funds from a collection taken by the colored people of the Methodist Church at Greensboro, which amounted to \$150, and that the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church “gave help” to purchase the twenty acres of land. www.bennett.edu. The Bennett College website references “emancipated slaves” as being the party responsible for the land purchase.

⁴²Ingram, *Methodism Alive*, 125-126. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 13. Sutton, “The Early Years of Bennett College, Greensboro,” vi. The site was purchased that same year by emancipated slaves.

opening of the prison to them that are bound.” The day school was renamed Bennett Seminary in his honor.⁴³

Bennett’s founding during Reconstruction is significant because it was a time during which America tried to put itself back together after the Civil War. Constitutional Amendments were proposed to abolish slavery, grant citizenship, and the right to vote to the formerly enslaved. These Reconstruction Amendments made steps to provide citizenship and the right to vote to the formerly enslaved, yet their proposal and time to ratification reveal the divided nature of American society at this juncture. The Thirteenth Amendment, submitted for ratification on January 31, 1865, was ratified December 6, 1865 – almost eleven months later. The Fourteenth Amendment, submitted for ratification in June 13, 1866, was ratified on July 9, 1868 – two years after submission and three years after the war’s end. The Fifteenth Amendment, submitted for ratification on February 16, 1869, more than four years after the war’s end; was ratified almost a year later – a full five years after the Civil War’s end.⁴⁴ Bennett’s founding at this juncture, as was the creation of more than 200 other institutions, with similar missions to educate the formerly enslaved, was a response to America’s need to educate the newly freed men, women, and children after more than 300 years of forced servitude. The education provided was to prepare them to be citizens of the American democracy, a status denied prior generations who, as enslaved individuals, were property, not citizens; and denied basic human rights.

Bennett’s first college course was taught in 1879, the same year the Freedmen’s Aid Society reported several things about the college: Bennett “had grown into an institution with four departments, including college level courses”; Bennett now had “full

⁴³Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 155-156. Ethel Stephens Arnett, *Greensboro North Carolina: The Seat of Guilford County* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 105.

⁴⁴Foner, *Give me Liberty!*, A-51, A-52.

normal, college, preparatory and theological courses”; and “students pass examinations very creditably.” Last, the Freedmen’s Aid Society reported that “the colored people of this section are, as a rule, better educated and in more prosperous circumstances than in most parts of the south.”⁴⁵ The Seminary was deemed to be

in a healthful and prosperous condition, and is doing for our people in the state a most excellent work. Its courses of study are full, its work thorough, and its corps of instructors is [as] able and [as] faithful as can be found in any similar institution in the south.⁴⁶

It was not until the following year, 1880, that the women of the Methodist Church would have an organization of their own through which they could provide mission work in the name of the church. Created on June 18, 1880, in Cincinnati, Ohio, at Trinity United Methodist Church, the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society was to focus its work in “the Southern Field,” with the goal being

to send Christian women into the homes of the colored people and by good counsel[,] aid in the work of establishing and maintaining Christian homes among them. Schools are to be organized for the girls and women in connection with our churches and the institutions of the society.⁴⁷

Its origin came at a time when there was an emphasis on women’s roles in domestic life, and participation in leadership roles in the church and society. At the same time, there was an emerging development in the “importance and prestige” of education, which merged with the Society’s “missionary passion.” By incorporating the education of Black women into their mission, the Woman’s Home Mission Society functionalized education and adapted it to the primary needs of the Black community.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 156.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 125.

While the Methodist women fought to create their own mission society within the Methodist Church hierarchy, instruction at FAS-affiliated and coeducational Bennett Seminary continued until 1883, when its name was changed and the institution began operating as coeducational Bennett College.⁴⁹ Initial steps toward a lasting relationship between the Woman's Home Mission Society and Bennett College surfaced with the creation and maintenance of the Kent Industrial Home on the campus of Bennett College in 1886.⁵⁰ Its purpose, "to teach girls and young ladies how to make a perfect Christian home," was in line with the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society's goal of improving the homes of the freedmen.⁵¹ The Home was opened on November 1, 1886, and dedicated on May 2, 1887. It was the gift of Mrs. James Kent of Gloversville, New York, and was named in memory of her late husband. Coursework in the 1887-1888 academic year included "sewing, dressmaking, housekeeping, cooking and nursing." The Home had three faculty and thirteen students under the direction of Sarah D. Snow. Its location on campus meant that Bennett College taught normal and industrial courses to African American women six years before the state of North Carolina opened the Normal and Industrial School for White Girls.⁵² In establishing the Kent Home at Bennett College, the Woman's Home Mission Society expanded the college's academic offering to Black women, as it provided the only opportunity for Black women in the state to

⁴⁹Ibid., 156. Sutton, *The Early History of Bennett College*, vi. Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women," 137.

⁵⁰Arnett, *Greensboro North Carolina*, 105. Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women," 136. Lockwood refers to the Home as the Kent Model Home.

⁵¹Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 123-125.

⁵²Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women," 136-137.

study homemaking.⁵³ The importance and popularity of the Home grew rapidly, and the available space soon became insufficient to accommodate all who wanted to attend.⁵⁴

Its years as Bennett Seminary, 1878-1883, and its early years as Bennett College, 1883-1926, roughly coincided with the Progressive Era, a time in America characterized by industrialization, technological advancement, immigration, migration, and urbanization.⁵⁵ In 1890, the year after North Carolina granted Bennett College a collegiate charter, census data show the number of Americans who lived in cities was one out of three.⁵⁶ By 1920, the number of American citizens living in urban areas would grow to two out of three, and 1.5 million Black Americans had left the South headed North to escape oppressive living conditions marked by an exploitative sharecropping system, and segregation, which, when coupled with lynching, was intended to keep Black Americans in their proper place.⁵⁷ Southern Black women lived this reality along with Black men and children. Black Southern women had fewer opportunities to obtain a liberal arts education in this period than their White counterparts; although coeducational

⁵³Ibid., 137-138.

⁵⁴Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 130-136, 162. The Methodist women established an estimated 17 Homes, 10 of which were on college campuses.

⁵⁵Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women," 137. On March 11, 1889, the State of North Carolina granted Bennett College a collegiate charter. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 156-160. Sutton, *The Early History of Bennett College*, vi-vii. Prior to receiving a collegiate charter, the Seminary was led by several principals including, Reverend W. J. Parkinson (1873-1875); Reverend Edward O. Thayer (1875-1881); and Reverend Wilbur Fletcher Steele (1881-1889). After the Seminary was granted a collegiate charter by the State of North Carolina in 1889, presidents included Dr. Charles D. Grandison (1889-1892), Dr. Jordan D. Chivas (1892-1905), Reverend Silas A. Peeler (1905-1913), Professor James E. Wallace (1913-1916), Professor W. B. Windsor (interim president 1916-1917), and Frank Trigg (1917-1926). Dr. Grandison was the "first Negro to head any Freedmen's Aid Society School." Arnett, *Greensboro North Carolina: The Seat of Guilford County*, 106.

⁵⁶Glenda Gilmore, "Responding to the Challenges of the Progressive Era," *Who Were the Progressives?* (Boston, Mass.: Bedford, St. Martins, 2002), 3, 6, 7.

⁵⁷Ibid., 3, 6, 7.

liberal arts colleges existed, there were no private colleges for Black women before World War I.⁵⁸

By 1921, the program at the Kent Home was “improved and expanded” in its newer facility. The newer building allowed for the enlargement of the domestic science room, and the acquisition of new equipment. This period was deemed Kent Home’s “finest years” because the program “exerted an ever widening influence.” The influence of women’s sphere expanded to include the public sphere as a means to protect the home from untoward outside influences and to guard against social ills entering the home. The Home’s existence laid the foundation for a partnership that was to come in 1926 between Bennett College, the Board of Education, and the Woman’s Home Mission Society. The MWHMS reported that the “young women at Kent Home were among the best students at Bennett College,” and the partnership between these two entities was characterized as “a bold and creative step” that lasted for 40 years.⁵⁹

At its February 1925 meeting, 39 years into the partnership between Bennett College and the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society, the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church created a commission to “study the institutions for negroes under its supervision” to determine if they met the “present needs” of the students. The report concluded that the most urgent need in the Southern educational system was “an institution of college grade where young [N]egro women might receive training by themselves apart from the distractions of a mixed school.”⁶⁰ The Board of

⁵⁸McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 44-45. www.spelman.edu. Spelman College added its collegiate department in 1879, changed its name to Spelman College in 1924, and ended its elementary department in 1928.

⁵⁹Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 132, 162. Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 137. The new Kent Home had capacity for 43 women. It included the Lucy A. Snider Library and space for a domestic science department.

⁶⁰Thomas F. Holgate, “Why Bennett College for Women?” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 10-11.

Education approved the proposal on February 4, 1926, and a committee was appointed to “work out the details of such cooperation in conjunction with a similar committee of the Woman’s Home Mission Society.”⁶¹

Before partnering in 1926, neither the Freedmen’s Aid Society nor the Woman’s Home Mission Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church had operated a higher education institution catering to the education needs of Black women. In deliberating on this partnership, the leadership of the Woman’s Home Mission Society considered the school’s demographics. Chief among the deciding factors in making the decision was the fact that Bennett College’s student body “had nearly four girls to one boy”; in addition, the determination was that “the location and the buildings seemed admirable for the establishment of a woman’s college.” Therefore in February 1926, “by action of the Board of Education ... Bennett College at Greensboro, North Carolina, formerly coeducational, became a woman’s college, under the patronage of the Board of Education and the Women’s Home Mission Society, jointly.”⁶²

This partnership was by no means happenstance. Former Bennett College president, Dr. Willa Beatrice Player, recounted that, in 1926, Northern Methodists “asked Bennett to take the lead in establishing a college for women,” based on their prior relationship and its success and popularity.⁶³ The Woman’s Home Mission Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church reported in its Forty-Fifth Annual Report that their goal since 1919 had been to establish a “Seminary for Negro Girls and Young Women.” While the Woman’s Home Mission Society had been unsuccessful in this venture up until that point, the Board of Education (BOE) of the Church proposed in 1926,

⁶¹Holgate, “Why Bennett College for Women?” 10-11.

⁶²Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern* 164-165.

⁶³Brown, *The Long Walk*, 22. Dr. Player was the first Black woman to head a four-year liberal arts college in the United States.

that the Board of Education and The Woman's Home Mission Society should unite ... in the establishment of a new Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina.... "The Urgent need for such a standardized college, giving to women of the Negro race the same advantages as are offered in the best modern colleges for women in the North, is evident. The ministry and church in North Carolina, with practical unanimity, endorse the change in Bennett from a co-educational institution to a high grade college for the training of women for larger life usefulness." ... The location is altogether admirable, as Greensboro is the most progressive city between Richmond and Atlanta, and its citizens are broadminded and co-operative in interracial relations.⁶⁴

The first meeting of the joint committee of the Board of Education and the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society was held on March 16, 1926. The Committee decided that a Board of Trustees would be responsible for the management of the college; and that a separate committee would be appointed to visit the campus and make recommendations to transition it from a coeducational institution to a women's college. The first officers of Bennett College's Board of Trustees included Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield, President; Mrs. M. C. Slutes, Secretary; and Mr. Charles H. Ireland, Treasurer. The Board met in May 1926 to approve the Committee's recommendations and to begin the task of selecting a president. David Dallas Jones accepted the position on August 21, 1926. Coeducational Bennett College ceased operation and Bennett College for Women began operating in September 1926.⁶⁵

The reorganized college enters Greensboro and North Carolina's history in 1926, just three years before the market crash that led to the ensuing Great Depression, which ravaged the country's financial system and threw millions of Americans into financial

⁶⁴The Woman's Home Mission Society, *The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Forty-Fifth Annual Report for the Year 1925-1926* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Woman's Home Mission Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1926), 78-79. This spelling is consistent with the spelling contained in the source document. The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society uses "Woman's" instead of "Women's," as does Linda Beatrice Brown in *The Long Walk*.

⁶⁵Holgate, "Why Bennett College for Women?," 10-11. Meeting Participants included Mrs. W. H. C. Goode, Mrs. J. H. Freeman, and Mrs. V. F. Devinney represented the WHMS, and Bishop Robert E. Jones, Dr. William S. Bovard, and Thomas F. Holgate represented the Board of Education.

ruin and economic insecurity. While Bennett College for Women was often perceived as a finishing school, Bennett never limited its mission of educating Black women or its vision to the prescribed roles women, specifically Black women, were expected to play in American society. Bennett's founders envisioned an education that prepared women to face the challenges of society at the local, state, national, and international levels. It was their intention to use the education process as a means to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to have an impact on their world.

The Society, in launching this venture with the Board of Education, focused “training and educational emphasis” on “the primary needs of the person, of the home, and of the community.” These “were applied at every level, aiming at functional preparation [of the student], and at the fullest development of the individual personality, and the highest type of womanhood.” The Methodist women viewed this mission as the “true function” of education. In 1926, when the Board of Education and the Woman's Home Mission Society partnered to establish Bennett College for Women, past experiences and the desire to “advance to new frontiers in education for Negro women” converged; and the result was a partnership many saw as “the most exciting venture in education the Society had thus far envisioned.”⁶⁶ In 1926, when the Woman's Home Mission Society joined with the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church to reorganize Bennett College into a college for women,⁶⁷ Methodists viewed education as one of “the responsibilities of the church to further its cause.” For them, Bennett Seminary was “fertile ground” for their interest in “education for women and for Black

⁶⁶Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 123-125, 163.

⁶⁷Ingram, *Methodism Alive*, 126; Brown, *The Long Walk*, 12-13; Player, “Improving College Education,” 1. Sutton, “The Early years of Bennett College,” vii.

women in particular.” It continues to see Bennett College as one of its projects and still supports the institution financially.⁶⁸

By 1926, America continued to struggle with issues of race, rights, and justice. Just six years after women were granted the right to vote, America’s Black citizens largely remained disfranchised despite passage of the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments. The right to vote in the South became dependent on one’s ability to read and interpret a portion of the State’s or United States’ Constitution to the satisfaction of State or County Registrars. The quality of education provided was conceived and shaped by those who never intended America’s Black citizens to achieve, or be viewed, on an equal basis with America’s White citizens. Economic opportunities also eluded the grasp of Black citizens seeking to improve their social, individual, and collective circumstance. At the end of World War I, a war America fought to make the world “safe for democracy,” America’s Black servicemen returned, and along with their civilian counterparts continued to fight for rights guaranteed them under the United States Constitution and its Amendments enacted more than half a century earlier. Black Americans faced new changes and challenges caused by migration, new employment opportunities, politics, women’s suffrage, and the role and place of women in American life. These social changes “stimulated a ferment in education,” as education institutions “sought standardization” and firmly linked specialization and education programs to employment opportunities. These same trends were evident at HBCUs and women’s colleges, and doubly so for the Black women’s colleges.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Brown, *The Long Walk*, 22. Ingram, *Methodism Alive*, 126. The source document for this citation, Brown’s *The Long Walk*, refers to the institution as Bennett Seminary; however, according to documentation consulted for this research, the name was changed to Bennett College in 1883. This change occurred prior to its receiving a collegiate charter from the state of North Carolina in 1889.

⁶⁹Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern* 163-165. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 181. Two of the women’s HBCUs, Scotia College also in North Carolina, and Tillotson College in Texas, merged with other institutions to become coeducational in 1932 and 1935, respectively; while Spelman

Re-envisioning Bennett College as a college for women entailed recognizing “that studies specially adapted to the needs of women should be included in the curriculum.” At the time, this meant giving “attention ... to matters relating to the refinements of family and community life,” while maintaining “vigorous standards of scholarship ... in all subjects of the curriculum” to ensure that the education provided to Black women at Bennett College would be on par with that received by women at “the best co-educational schools.”⁷⁰

Greensboro was on the “main line” of the Southern Railway; situated midway between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, Georgia. Bennett’s presence in the city was noted as “indispensible to the welfare of the community,” and it was called “one of Greensboro’s most valuable assets.”⁷¹ At the time of its reorganization as a college for women under the leadership of David Dallas Jones, the campus had expanded to thirty-eight acres on Greensboro’s northeastern edge.⁷² The value of its physical plant, its buildings and structures, grew more than 10 times its 1891 value of \$30,000 to \$325,000 by 1926; this was attributed to the addition of several buildings on the campus, prior to Jones’s arrival, including Carolina Hall (1897), the President’s Home (1914-1915), a new

College in Georgia and Bennett College continued to provide higher education solely for women. NCA&T, also an HBCU, was a public four-year coeducational college. Drewry and Doermann indicate that there were, in total, 12 single-sex HBCUs founded: 7 female – Bennett College, Spelman College, Scotia College, Miner Teachers College, Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, Hartshorn Memorial College, and Mary Allen Seminary; and 5 male – Cookman College, Johnson C. Smith, Morehouse College, Lincoln University, and Morgan College.

⁷⁰Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern* 164-165. *Bennett College for Women Circular of Information* (Greensboro, North Carolina, September, 1926), 3.

⁷¹Bennett College for Women Circular of Information, 1926, 7-8.

⁷²Arthur J. Klein, *Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1928, No. 7. Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1929), 499.

grade building, Girl's dormitory (1922), the Carnegie Negro Library (1923-1924), and a new classroom building (1925).⁷³

At a time when the majority of Americans still lived in rural areas and lacked indoor plumbing and electricity, the college campus included nine structures, “seven brick and two board structures.” Among the facilities available to students and staff was a new Academic Building (1923) that held “nine large rooms.” The two-story building had eight recitation rooms and laboratories, with the first floor used for high school classes and the second floor for college classrooms.⁷⁴ There were laboratories “equipped with modern appliances” available for Chemistry, Physics, and Biology courses; the remaining six rooms were used for “general educational purposes.” Robert E. Jones Hall, a 40-room dormitory erected in 1922 at a cost of \$80,000, had a capacity for up to 130 girls, and included “special rooms” with a “private bath for lady teachers,” a living and reception space described as “beautiful and commodious,” in addition to a “laundry, trunk room, and [a] gymnasium.”⁷⁵

There was also a “beautifully designed and well appointed” new refectory (1922), constructed of brick, “for cooking and eating.” Capacity in the dining hall was 300, and the kitchen was “equipped with ... the latest facilities and furnishings, cabinets and linen closets.”⁷⁶ The kitchen equipment included the “newest type of baker,” in which all types of “breads, cakes and pies” could be made. Another building simply described as “a brick

⁷³Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 155-172. Sutton, “The Early History of Bennett College,” vi-vii. Board of Education Methodist Episcopal Church, *Survey Report of Colleges for Negroes*, (Methodist Episcopal Church, 1932), 46. Though collegiate status had been granted, the college still enrolled students in their normal school division.

⁷⁴Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 499.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 499. Robert E. Jones was the first Black bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the brother of David Dallas Jones.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 499.

structure” had four rooms used for teaching and practicing music, all items associated with women’s domestic sphere. The President’s Home (1914-1915) and two frame structures were also located on the campus, as well as the rebuilt three-story, 25-room Kent Hall (1910-1911), named in honor of James Kent’s wife Anna.⁷⁷ It was described as a “beautiful brick structure,” which the college used it for administrative offices, the library, and the Home Economics department.⁷⁸

The College proudly reported in its circular that its buildings were “lighted by electricity, heated by steam, well ventilated, and have ample plumbing facilities.” This fact is significant given the quality of housing available to Greensboro’s Black citizens during the early twentieth century in the rural South.⁷⁹ The newly rebuilt Carrie Barge Chapel, including the Norman Tower, provided a “cozy and attractive place” for College assemblies. The campus was also home to one of the numerous Carnegie libraries built with funding from the Carnegie Foundation and donated to several cities throughout the United States. In Greensboro, space was made available on Bennett’s campus to house the Carnegie Library for Negroes (1924). Under the direction of the college librarian, it was open to Bennett’s students to study and make use of its holdings alongside Greensboro’s Black citizens; and its presence on the campus added “materially to the quality” of student work. When the Carnegie Negro Library was built, the college only had a small library, the Lucy A. Snider Library, located in Kent Home. Bennett’s larger and permanent library, Holgate, would not be completed until 1939.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 499.

⁷⁸The page in the original source was ripped; I inserted “Economics Department” based on the surrounding text.

⁷⁹*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information* (Greensboro, North Carolina, September, 1926), 8-9. Player, “Improving College Education,” 28.

⁸⁰*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information* (Greensboro, North Carolina, September, 1926), 8-9. Player, “Improving College Education,” 28.

At the time of its conversion, Bennett College still provided a high school curriculum in addition to two years of college level work. The high school curriculum served two purposes. First, it sought to provide knowledge to every girl in the school of “those things which will most enrich her life and fit her for usefulness in her home, in the community, and in her church.” Second, the College sought “to give training in those subjects which are fundamental to further study and which will fit the student to continue her studies in college or to earn a livelihood in some useful occupation.” That useful occupation was teaching. Admission to the high school required students to have “satisfactorily completed the prescribed elementary course.” The high school course covered 12 subjects and included four units of English. The emphasis on English was “an effort ... to cultivate the use of correct English in speaking and writing.” Attention was also directed toward improving student “composition” and encouraging the “reading and interpretation of good literature,” in addition to developing a “knowledge of the Bible,” as this was viewed, because of Bennett’s affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church, as “fundamental in a Christian civilization” as well as forming the “background of religious training.” The College also focused students’ attention on maintaining “a healthy body” and developing “knowledge of how to take care of it” because, they believed, this was “essential to all useful living.” To this end, the College required students to engage in “moderate physical exercise adequate to the needs of the student,” including “out-of-doors games.”⁸¹

To secure admission for collegiate study at Bennett, applicants were required to be “graduates of a standard four-year high school” and “present certificates showing credits for at least fifteen units of high school work, including three units of English, one unit of Algebra, and one unit of Geometry.” Bennett’s high school curriculum required a total of

⁸¹*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 3, 11, 14. *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1928-1929*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 1928): 6.

sixteen units; therefore, all who completed high school at Bennett met the admission requirements for the college, if they chose to continue their studies. When potential students could not do this, they were required to complete what amounted to an entrance examination to prove proficiency in the required subjects, and to ensure they were prepared to pursue and complete the college course of study.⁸²

Courses in the two-year college program were comparable to those found in the “curriculum of a standard college,” as Bennett aimed to provide its students and graduates with an education that was thorough and would “receive full recognition” once they left the college. Courses selected for the early curriculum included materials “best adapted to the maturity of the student,” and consideration was given to those “subjects most likely to be helpful in her growth and development.” Recognizing that many of its students would not have the opportunity to continue their education after completion of their studies at Bennett, the College curriculum was “mapped out so as to give contact with fundamental subjects” in the limited time during which students were enrolled at Bennett. Many students attending the college sought to “prepare themselves to teach in grade and high schools”; therefore, the course of study was arranged to include a “considerable number” of “Teacher Training Courses ... in the regular program.”⁸³ Primary school teachers were required to have two years of normal or college training, and high school teachers were required to have four full years of college. However, according to the Methodist Episcopal Church, many of the estimated 47,000 teachers throughout the South did not have the minimum requirements for these roles.⁸⁴ Completion of the College’s course of study required sixty semester hours of college

⁸²*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 14.

⁸³Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 2.

⁸⁴Board of Education Methodist Episcopal Church, *Survey Report of Colleges for Negroes*, 2. *Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 14.

work, with at least half taken at Bennett. All diplomas were awarded at the annual commencement.⁸⁵

Bennett made every effort to ensure that parents and families who entrusted the College to educate their daughters knew that the campus environment was safe for Black women in the segregated South. Its 1926 Circular indicated, “Every precaution will be taken to give the young women who attend Bennett College for Women homelike protection.” This included chaperoning “young women” when “making trips into the city,” and the expectation that each student would be “cheerfully ... governed by the rules of the College.” The College embodied ideals it believed would stimulate, among its student body, the “highest form of control, namely, self government.”⁸⁶ To this end, the new college planned several campus-based organizations to engage and develop students’ interests.⁸⁷

Among the campus-based activities, as early as 1926, was the Student Council. Elected by the student body and functioning in collaboration with the faculty, the Council was responsible for “the conduct of the student body” and fostered “initiative and leadership” among Bennett’s students. The Glee Club united students with an interest in music – its appreciation and performance; additionally, it provided musical training for those interested in a “more intensive” music education experience outside of a “regular classroom” setting. The Dramatic Club offered students an opportunity to learn the craft of acting, and perform selected works for the College and Greensboro community throughout the year. Athletic offerings included tennis, baseball, and hiking. These offerings were in line with the College’s stated goal of engaging students in “moderate physical exercise.” The French Club encouraged appreciation of the language, as well as

⁸⁵*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 15.

⁸⁶*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 8-9.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 8-9.

offered an intense and immersive experience so that students could become proficient in the language, as well as have an opportunity to perform in French language plays.⁸⁸

Also among the campus-based activities was the World Fellowship Committee. This committee was dedicated to exposing Bennett's students to the "aspirations, ideals and history of students of other lands," thus giving them an international and global perspective on the world in which they lived. The most noteworthy of the campus-based activities is the Community Service Committee. It is partial evidence of their commitment to provide service to the Greensboro community throughout the thirty years studied here. The College collaborated with Greensboro's Board of Family Welfare to complete the Community Service Committee's work. This committee's main goal was to build bridges between the campus and the Greensboro community. Throughout the year, students "interested themselves in various forms of welfare work for the community." Among the services delivered were the provision of Christmas trees to children in Greensboro, and the repair and alteration of clothing for "needy families in the city."⁸⁹

Since its reorganization as a college for women, Bennett College's leadership reflected the student body it was created to serve. Its first two Presidents were Black and had familial roots in the South. They were well aware of the climate and conditions under which Black Americans lived. David Dallas Jones, its first president, was a native of Greensboro, North Carolina; and its second president, Willa Beatrice Player, was born in Jackson, Mississippi. The two leaders worked to shape and mold the new college for women into the institution the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church had envisioned in 1875 when they started to petition the Freedmen's Aid Society to work alongside them on behalf of Black women in the South.

⁸⁸Ibid., 8-9.

⁸⁹*Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, 8-9.

Bennett College under the Leadership of David Dallas Jones and Willa Beatrice Player

David Dallas Jones, son of shoemaker Sidney Dallas Jones and teacher Mary Jane Holley Jones, the “first colored teacher in Guilford County, N.C.,” was born November 19, 1887, just a year after the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society established the Kent Home on Bennett’s campus.⁹⁰ He was the younger brother of Bishop Robert E. Jones, the first Black man elected as a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1920, and Minnie Arleta Jones Gilmer.⁹¹ Jones earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan College in Connecticut with the class of 1911, and later attended the University of Chicago and Columbia University during the summer months in pursuit of his master’s degree. His studies at Columbia were supported by scholarship assistance from the Phelps Stokes Fund, and his degree was awarded by Columbia University in 1930.⁹² During his presidency at Bennett, Jones’s leadership was recognized with honors from several higher education institutions, including his undergraduate alma mater. Wesleyan College bestowed him with honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa for

⁹⁰“Who’s Who in America’ Lists Jones Brothers,” *Afro-American*, June 22, 1940, 5. Jones’s parents were Sidney Dallas Jones (1845-1893) and Mary Jane Holley Jones (1849-1924).

⁹¹Robert E. Jones, born February 19, 1872, helped found Gulfside Assembly, the only gathering place in the United States where African Americans had access to the Gulf of Mexico for recreation and vacation purposes. He also participated in the unification movement to integrate the White and Black members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the late 1930s. The campaign was unsuccessful, and the Church created the Central Jurisdiction for its Black members. The first conference of the Jurisdiction was held in St. Louis in June 18-23, 1940. The other Black man elected as bishop along with Jones was Matthew Wesley Clair. Jones’s sister, Minnie Arleta Jones Gilmer, was born on August 27, 1874.

⁹²David Dallas Jones to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, 28 March 1927, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

“outstanding achievement.”⁹³ Both Howard University and Syracuse University awarded him the LL.D. in 1937 and 1954, respectively.⁹⁴

After completing college, Jones first worked with the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) from 1911 to 1914 as Secretary of the International Committee.⁹⁵ Assigned to St. Louis, Jones raised money to build the Pine Street YMCA, and is credited with raising “the largest sum of money ever” from St. Louis’s Black community. Funds were used to help construct the YMCA where he served as the Executive Secretary from 1914 to 1923. In recognition of his ability to raise funds and complete the construction of this YMCA building, he was given the title of “Builder.” Jones continued perpetuating this honorific during his 29 years of service to Bennett College. His accomplishments in St. Louis prepared him and developed his skills as an adept administrator and contributed to his public relations and leadership abilities. Jones was elected to the presidency of the National Association of Schools and Colleges of the Methodist Church in 1946, where he was the first Black person to serve in this role.⁹⁶ He also held membership on the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and served as the Treasurer of the Jurisdictional Conference during the 1940s.⁹⁷

⁹³“School Named for Bennett President,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1953 1. “Eleven Years Ago,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 2.

⁹⁴“David Dallas Jones,” *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (Apr. 1956): 179-181.

⁹⁵Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166. David Dallas Jones to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, 28 March 1927, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

⁹⁶“First Negro to Hold Presidency,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1947, 1. Memo from Nancy L. Pinkard, undated memo, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Public Relations – Publicity Advertising for Bennett College (1947), David Dallas Jones Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁹⁷“School Named for Bennett President,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1953 1. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166. David Dallas Jones to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, 28 March 1927,

While in St. Louis, Jones met and married Susie Pearl Williams, a graduate of the University of Cincinnati, who also studied at Columbia University and the University of Chicago.⁹⁸ Born in Danville, Kentucky, Susie Jones was the daughter of Frank and Fannie Williams.⁹⁹ She was active and committed to her work in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and on the National level of the Methodist Episcopal Church, where she worked under the Board of Missions.¹⁰⁰ In recognition of her years of dedicated service to Bennett, the highest honor awarded to a Bennett alumna, the Susie W. Jones Award, was established in 1963.¹⁰¹ In addition to serving alongside her husband in his capacity as president for 29 years, Mrs. Jones served as Bennett's Registrar from 1956 through 1964; and was honored by the North Carolina Council of Church Women in 1969 with life membership. It was the first time a Black woman received this honor. Together the Joneses raised four children: David, a lawyer;¹⁰² Frances (BC '39), who organized the 1938 boycott of Greensboro's National and Carolina Theatres, and later became a physician;¹⁰³ Frank; and Paul, a graphic artist.¹⁰⁴

Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

⁹⁸Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Susie Jones. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., iii.

⁹⁹Black Women Oral History Project. Interviews, 1976-1981. Susie Jones. OH-31. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., ii. Mrs. Jones was born in Danville, Kentucky, April 30, 1892 (d. 1984) to Frank L. Williams and Fannie B. Williams; both were college educated.

¹⁰⁰Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166.

¹⁰¹"For Distinguished Service," *Bennett College Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (February 1963): 9.

¹⁰²"United Negro College Gets Underway," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1946, 1.

¹⁰³Frances Estelle Jones Bonner (1919-2000) is the only daughter of David and Susie Jones. She is a Bennett alumna and attended Boston University Medical School, where she was trained as a Psychiatrist. David graduated from Wesleyan College and Harvard Law School and was Director of the Harlem Teams for Self-Help. Paul was a production manager of graphic arts at Saint John's Associates in NYC, and Frank was Director of the Urban Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Joneses possessed a graciousness that enabled them to effortlessly mingle with ordinary people and extend to them the “warmth, dignity and sincerity” often reserved for “notables in church, community, and foundations.” Although his work with the YMCA provided practical administrative experience, Jones reportedly could not stand idly by accepting its “perennial appeasement and hypocritical compromises” related to race and religion. After leaving St. Louis, Jones served as Secretary of the Standard Life Insurance Company from 1923 to 1924, then for the next two years he worked as a General Field Agent with the Southern Interracial Commission.¹⁰⁵ When Jones accepted the presidency of Bennett College in August 1926, it “had [become] run down.”¹⁰⁶ The college became an institution solely for the education of women, with David and Susie Jones in service to the college community. Together they remade Bennett into “a sort of Vassar or Wellesley for colored young women.”¹⁰⁷

For the next 29 years, David and Susie Jones worked together to develop the college, which became his “most enduring monument.” Jones’s work with the YMCA

¹⁰⁴“David Dallas Jones,” *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (Apr., 1956): 179-181. “School Named for Bennett President,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1953, 1. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166. David Dallas Jones to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, 28 March 1927, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁵Founded in 1919, the Southern Interracial Commission merged with the Southern Regional Council in 1944. By the 1920s, it had about 800 local interracial committees. It originated out of several organizations including the Atlanta Christian Council, and the YMCA’s War Work Council, which sought to lessen racial tensions at the end of World War I (1917-1918).

¹⁰⁶Brawley reports in *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern* that, at the beginning of Dr. Frank Trigg’s administration, Jones’s predecessor, Bennett was at a “low ebb and heavily in debt.” Under his leadership, the physical plant expanded with its value increasing from about \$45,000 to \$200,000 between 1915 and 1924; the academic program grew and improved, and student enrollment was steady at 300 annually; this included high school as well as college students.

¹⁰⁷Mary Ann Guitar, “Bennett’s Proper Pickets: Negro College Girls Must be Tough Fighters on the Picket Line, Young Ladies at Home,” *Mademoiselle Magazine* 61, no. 6 (June 1965): 112-115, 130-131. Bennett was cited as the Vassar of the South in a January 1951 *Ebony* article. *Mademoiselle Magazine*’s 1965 article compared Bennett to Wellesley.

had given him skills most new college presidents acquired on the job. Jones, however, had already acquired administrative and fundraising skills, selecting personnel, and program development. The challenge Jones faced in accepting leadership of a college for Black women in the segregated South was that by 1926, when he returned to Greensboro, philanthropic funds for missionary schools and colleges for Black people in the South had come to an end. One year after Jones's arrival at Bennett College, Clark Foreman reported to the Phelps-Stokes Fund that Jones was "working very hard to make it a first-class college for Negro girls," acknowledging that Jones, by accepting the presidency, was "confronted with a very difficult problem;" and that, in facing this challenge, he had cleaned up the school and implemented the suggestions recommended by the 1916 Phelps-Stokes Educational Report. After the March 1915 campus visit, four recommendations were made:¹⁰⁸

That the plan to make this a school exclusively for girls be encouraged. That the training of teachers be the central aim. That the courses in gardening and home economics be made a part of the regular course. That the school authorities endeavor to have the city of Greensboro take over the large enrollment of local pupils.¹⁰⁹

The report reveals that the idea of making Bennett College a college for women had been around for some time, at least five years, before the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society began to think about it in 1919. At the urging of MWHMS, the college had become a college for women only; it provided teacher training; and although a Home Economics department had not yet been established, courses were being taught; and discussions were underway for the establishment of a high school for Greensboro's Black

¹⁰⁸ "David Dallas Jones," 179-180. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166. David Dallas Jones to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, 28 March 1927, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Jesse Jones, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1916, No. 39, *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Education Schools for Colored People in the United States, Volume 2*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), 413.

students desiring a high school education. Overall, Foreman reported that the College was “well received by the people of Greensboro,” and “more girls entered for [the] college course this year than ever before in its history.” Foreman also reported that Greensboro’s white citizens “enthusiastically” supported Jones and were “cooperating with him in his effort.” Foreman attributed Jones’s early success to his work with Methodist minister Dr. Will W. Alexander on the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in Atlanta. There, Jones “showed himself to be a very superior person” and displayed “insight into ... interracial problem[s]” that made him a “valuable citizen of the South.”¹¹⁰

As a private college, Bennett did not have to “kowtow to public prejudices” in order to ensure that it continued to receive its annual appropriation. Keeping with his bestowed title of “Builder,” the college under Jones’s leadership built eighteen modern college buildings and professors’ homes and apartments. His most enduring legacy may be the college’s attainment of accreditation as a junior college. Bennett’s leadership, as embodied in the Jones and Player team, exemplified a “standard [of] independence” that permeated the campus. Jones was known to instruct students “not to spend money where they were mistreated,” “to walk rather than take segregated transportation,” and spend a portion of their time each week “helping the community.” This type of instruction emboldened students over the three decades to take action against injustices perpetuated against them because of their race.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Clark Foreman notes to file “Bennett College,” 1927, Box 25, Folder 3, Bennett College 1927-1943 Phelps Stokes Fund Records, Manuscript Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. The Home Economics department was formally established in 1937. *Catalogue and Circular of Information 1920-1921*, (Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina), June 1920, 45-60.

¹¹¹ “David Dallas Jones,” 179-180. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 20. Lorraine Ahearn, “When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938,” in *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*, ed. Naeemah Clark, (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 497.

Jones also confronted discrimination within the Methodist Church working alongside his brother, Bishop Robert E. Jones, to rectify discriminatory practices within the church. In 1936, the Church began efforts to segregate its Black membership into the Central Jurisdiction, “to welcome the white Methodist Church South.” Bishop Jones had already taken a vocal stand against this proposal. The Jones brothers, along with Mary McCleod Bethune and “too few others,” stood in opposition to the move. The lack of support from other Black members within the Methodist Episcopal Church led Jones to proclaim there were many “ambitious Negro ministers [who] were too timid and squeamish to speak out against segregation and jimcrowism in the church of God because of hopes for promotion!” This action factored into the lessons embedded into the Bennett College curriculum.¹¹²

The skills Jones acquired in St. Louis were those most needed for Bennett College. When he became president in September 1926, the College had just ten college students, had lost its accreditation, and the endowment stood at \$100. By the end of his service to Bennett College in 1955, the college had almost 500 college students and was known throughout Black American communities for its excellence; it was a model of racial pride and strength and boasted an endowment of \$1.5 million.¹¹³ As his right hand for nearly 25 years of Jones’s 29 years at the college, he requested Willa Beatrice Player be named his successor to ensure the continued progress of the college, and to recognize her numerous contributions to Bennett’s growth during her years of service. Player, a native of Akron, Ohio, joined Bennett’s faculty in 1930 as a Latin and French teacher. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Ohio Wesleyan University, and a master’s degree from Oberlin University. Additional graduate study was completed at the University of

¹¹²“David Dallas Jones,” *Journal of Negro History*, 180-181.

¹¹³Ibid., 179-180. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 20. Ahearn, *When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line*, 94. Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 497.

Chicago, the University of Wisconsin, and a year of study at the University of Grenoble, in France, where she earned a Certificat d'Etudes. Dr. Player earned her doctorate from Columbia University in 1948, after completion of her dissertation entitled, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College." Player, like Jones, was the recipient of several honorary degrees. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the admission of women to her alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan University awarded Player the Doctor of Laws degree in 1953; she was also awarded the L.L.D. from Lycoming College (1962), Morehouse College (1963), and Albion College (1963).¹¹⁴ She received a Doctor of Humane Letters from Keuka College (1967), and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (1967); and last, Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical University awarded her a Doctor of Public Service degree (1971).¹¹⁵

Born on August 9, 1909, in Jackson, Mississippi, Willa Beatrice Player was the third child of Beatrice Day Player and Clarence Cromwell Player. To escape "oppressive living conditions" in the South, the Player family relocated to Akron, Ohio in 1917. Mrs. Player, a homemaker and a leader in the church, read frequently, played the piano, crocheted, and was a lifelong learner. Mr. Player, a property owning businessman, built homes in their new Akron community and counseled both daughters to do their best and be prepared to take care of themselves so that they would not have to be dependent on a man. Player inserted these lessons into her work at Bennett College to empower students and help to them advocate for themselves and on behalf of the communities in which they lived. Both daughters, Edith and Willa, attended college, Oberlin and Ohio Wesleyan,

¹¹⁴"President Jones Retired; Dr. Player Succeeds Him," *Bennett College Bulletin*, Fall 1955, 5.

¹¹⁵Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 170-171. George Alexander Sewell and Margaret L. Dwight, *Mississippi Black History Makers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 229.

respectively.¹¹⁶ Willa majored in Latin and French, subjects considered suitable for a woman planning to enter the secure profession of teaching. Becoming a teacher allowed Willa to support herself and heed her father's admonishment.¹¹⁷

With her academic preparedness, efficiency, and dedication, Dr. Player was an important member of the Bennett community from the time she was hired. Her skills and talent allowed her to work in several academic administration roles, including Registrar, Director of Admissions, Acting Dean, Coordinator of Instruction, Vice President, Acting President, and finally President. Jones groomed Player during their 25-year partnership as his successor through the tasks he assigned to her over the years. By Player's own recollection, Jones gave her the task of planning faculty leaves and vacations, reviewing and preparing budgets, handling contract renewals, and performance evaluations.¹¹⁸ Player also gained valuable experience in curriculum development and revision while serving as the chair to the Central Curriculum Committee.¹¹⁹ Her election to the presidency of Bennett College, by the Board of Trustees, made her the first African American woman to head a four-year liberal arts college in the United States.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶Brown, *The Long Walk*, 49. Clarence Jr. died at the age of 12; and Edith Player Brown's daughter, Linda Beatrice Brown, was a student at Bennett College during Player's presidency.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 76, 48. Mr. Player owned property and had a plastering and contracting company.

¹¹⁸Brown, *The Long Walk*, 64.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 79. Lockwood, "Bennett College for Women 1926-1966," 198. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 7. "Willa B. Player, 94, Pioneer Black Educator," *New York Times*, 20 August 2003. Player's higher education service subsequent to Bennett included serving as the Director of the Division of Institutional Development in the Bureau of Postsecondary Education in Washington, D.C., where she was instrumental in establishing Title III as a major source of categorical support for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions.

¹²⁰Player was reportedly offered the presidency of Spelman College in 1952; however, she chose to remain at Bennett, fulfilling the mission articulated by the Woman's Home Mission Society and the Board of Education in 1926. Letter to Frederick Patterson, March 17, 1966, Box 430, Folder: Bennett College, 1959-1969, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library. Jeanne Noble was recommended as a candidate to succeed Player as Bennett's President in 1966.

Bennett College endeavored to “maintain high academic standards.” Shortly after its reorganization, the college received recognition for the changes made by its leadership team. In the 1927-1928 academic year, the North Carolina State Department of Education accredited the institution as a junior college, and students who majored in education were awarded a State Teachers Certificate after completing the two-year course.¹²¹ The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS) added Bennett College to its list of accredited four-year colleges in 1932, in addition to being granted membership in the American Association of Collegiate Registrars (AACR). The college was granted membership in the Association of American Colleges (AAC) in 1934; and in 1935, the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools awarded Bennett an “A” rating.¹²²

The Joneses enacted the program of Bennett College as envisioned by the Woman’s Home Mission Society. Together they were a central force directing the college and influenced the lives of students attending Bennett. Its high school program ended with the conclusion of the 1931-1932 academic year. Beginning with the fall of 1932, the college’s four-year program was fully implemented. By 1940, Bennett’s student body totaled 356, with students coming from twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia. Bennett’s “rapid growth and popularity” was attributed to the “physical development and beauty of the campus,” which was described as “a tranquil island to itself,” with a “grand and beautiful wrought iron gate” that Dr. Player noted represented the students’ hopes and dreams and that welcomed them to a new life, and to the “community of educated men and women on the high occasion of graduation.”¹²³

¹²¹Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 497.

¹²²Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 166.

¹²³Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166. Ahearn, *When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line*, 93-94. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 11-12.

Designed by landscape architect Walter E. Campbell, the campus was laid out on a quadrangular plan and dotted with grand magnolia trees.¹²⁴ The Federal *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities* noted,

“The survey committee was favorably impressed with the immaculate appearance of all the buildings on the campus. The dormitories were not only neat and clean, but indicated that extra effort was being made to assure ideal living conditions for the women students.” It is a cause for rejoicing that the physical design of the campus, its setting, and the placement of its buildings, culminating as they do in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel, majestic in its simplicity, express the same warmth and unity of spirit which the college envisions for its students.¹²⁵

Its growth could also be attributed to the “quality and personality of the leadership of the college,” including its recruitment efforts, and its educational emphasis. The results of these efforts were embodied in its alumnae as evidenced in their “intellectual, cultural and personality development.” Bennett’s education was summed up in its ideals, which included notions of “responsibility, loyalty – to one’s self as well as others, freedom of activity in work and play, open-mindedness, and a purposefulness that engenders consecration to an ideal.”¹²⁶ Early in its new life, Bennett became an “unusual place of educational exploration and human development.”¹²⁷

Jones needed to raise funds to ensure provision of the physical necessities of a growing college. This meant new buildings, new programs, and funding to support scholarships for students and to assist faculty in furthering their education. Supporting faculty pursuing graduate education was expected to strengthen Bennett College’s academic reputation. Bennett College demonstrated, during its early years of existence,

¹²⁴Board of Education Methodist Episcopal Church, *Survey Report of Colleges for Negroes*, 10.

¹²⁵Willie B. Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College*, Bennett College Bulletin, Vol. 20, No. 1 (August 1948): 11. Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, 500.

¹²⁶Brown, *The Long Walk*, 27-28.

¹²⁷Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 165-166.

that it would become “an unusual college with high standards and appealing goals.” This was first evident in its fundraising efforts. Bennett College was able to secure funding from philanthropists and foundations, in addition to support from its Methodist Church conference, to fund its mission to educate Black women in the segregated South during the early twentieth century. Among its early supporters was the General Education Board (GEB) of New York City, a Rockefeller family-funded organization. The GEB awarded a conditional grant of \$250,000 for endowment with the requirement that the administration raise an equal amount for new buildings and equipment.¹²⁸ As noted by Foreman, the college had support from the Greensboro community, both Black and White, as “local citizens, various boards, agencies, and friends contributed to the campaign for matching gifts.” Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pfeiffer of New York City gave additional funding to secure the GEB endowment gift. The Pfeiffers’ gift totaling \$247,000 was earmarked for buildings. Other early donors included the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the John F. Slater Fund, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Each, over a period of time, made “substantial grants” to the college to support growth and development in its education programs.¹²⁹

Ongoing support also came from the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Woman’s Home Mission Society, which continued their funding. Since the beginning of their partnership, the MWHMS provided Bennett with “regular appropriations, and substantial special appropriations and gifts for special purposes.”¹³⁰ The North Carolina Conference also supported the college through

¹²⁸“What of the Future,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 2 (October 1931): 1.

¹²⁹Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 166.

¹³⁰The Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society later changed its name to the Woman’s Division of Christian Service.

sacrificial gifts.¹³¹ The status of the “Bennett College Self-Denial Fund” was reported on in October 1929, and followed by a resolution “pleading for the continuance of our support to Bennett College.” The resolution passed, and at the next North Carolina Conference, attendees committed to raise \$25,000 within a three-year period for the college’s endowment. Peter Clark, one of Greensboro’s former Black residents, bequeathed \$20,000 to the college from his estate. It represented the largest single gift made to the college “from a Negro.” By far, the Merner-Pfeiffer family was Bennett’s most generous benefactor, as collectively the family gave Bennett more than one million dollars.¹³²

When reorganized as a new college for women in 1926, Bennett’s campus consisted of 38 acres and several buildings, three of which were new.¹³³ Just two years prior to the reorganization, Bennett’s buildings and grounds were valued at \$200,000. During the intervening years, the addition of three new buildings to the college’s existing facilities raised its assessed value to an estimated \$325,000. In 1932, the same year Bennett College received a “B” rating from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS), the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church recommended several additions to the Bennett campus to support its planned enrollment growth. The additions included a central heating plant, a new dormitory with “fire resistant construction,” a “household arts and physical science building” with a portion of the space devoted to a “temporary library,” and the acquisition of property on the

¹³¹Bennett College was located within the jurisdictional boundary of the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

¹³²Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 167-168. “What of the Future?,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 1.

¹³³Sutton, “The Early History of Bennett College,” vi-vii. Bennett Hall (1878), Carolina Hall (1897), Kent Home (1887), Kent Home (1910), President’s Home (1914-1915), Grade Building (1919), Dorm/refectory (1922), Carnegie Negro Library (1923-1924), Classroom Building (1925).

southwest corner of the campus. The following additions were also recommended once student enrollment stabilized: a “new fire resistant classroom building,” a “new library,” a “new chapel,” and “additional faculty homes.”¹³⁴ During the first fourteen years of Jones’s leadership, the campus increased to 42 acres, and six new buildings were added to the campus: Thirkield Gymnasium (1933), Pfeiffer Hall – an upper-class dormitory (1934), Merner-Pfeiffer Heating Plant (1934), Henry Pfeiffer Science Hall (1937), Annie Merner Hall – a dormitory for sophomores (1938), and Thomas F. Holgate Library (1939). In 1940, construction was started on two new buildings – Pfeiffer Memorial Chapel and Carrie Barge Hall, another dormitory.¹³⁵

Reporting to the Board of Trustees for the 1947-1948 academic year, Jones indicated that the college was well on its way to becoming a national college. Its 503 students came from 23 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands (USVI), and Africa.¹³⁶ The college’s revised curriculum included new courses in economics, sociology, psychology of religion, and a new program offering a minor in library science. Additionally, the state’s Department of Education approved the revised teacher education program, which was planned to launch in the fall of 1948.¹³⁷ In addition to endowment funding, the GEB provided Bennett with a gift to hire a full-time

¹³⁴Board of Education Methodist Episcopal Church. *Survey Report of Colleges for Negroes*, 11. “Attaining Standards,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 14-15.

¹³⁵Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 168. “What of the Future?,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 1.

¹³⁶“To the Trustees of Bennett College, 1947-1948 Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for Women from David Dallas Jones,” Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Reports (Treasurer’s) Reports to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹³⁷“To the Trustees of Bennett College,” Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for women from David Dallas Jones. 1947-1948, Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Report (Treasurer’s) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), 1-2. Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

college physician.¹³⁸ In his report to the Board of Trustees, Jones provided activity highlights of a few of the campus clubs for the academic year that impacted the Greensboro community. The Sociology Club put its education into action. At the request of the Council of Social Agencies, Sociology Club members completed an investigation into the availability of recreational resources for “low economic level” members of Greensboro’s Black community. These data represented an update to the Department of Public Welfare’s analysis of 1940 census data, conducted by John R. Larkins, on North Carolina’s Black population.¹³⁹ Other members of the club held conferences with city and county Superintendents of Schools to secure data on Greensboro and Guilford County schools that the Subcommittee on School Plants used in its planning process.¹⁴⁰

Gifts totaling \$412,000 were received during the 1947-1948 academic year by the college from the Pfeiffer estate, \$262,000 bringing the family’s total contribution to Bennett College to \$1,032,000; and from the Woman’s Society of Christian Service, \$150,000.¹⁴¹ Jones also reported securing the services of a fundraiser, I. Ervin Pelter, from Ludington, Michigan. Pelter’s efforts on behalf of Bennett were to be supplemented locally by the assistance of Dr. Jackson and Mrs. Cone. Reynolds Hall was under construction, and its completion, expected by fall 1948, would bring Bennett’s on-campus housing capacity to 399 students. Construction of the new Student Union had not

¹³⁸“To the Trustees of Bennett College,” 1947-1948 Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for women from David Dallas Jones, Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Report (Treasurer’s) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), 3. Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹³⁹John R. Larkins, *Special Bulletin Number 23, The Negro Population of North Carolina: Social and Economic* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944). 45-48. Victoria W. Wolcott, *Race, Riots and Roller Coasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

¹⁴⁰“To the Trustees of Bennett College,” 1947-1948 Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for Women from David Dallas Jones, 4. Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Report (Treasurer’s) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹⁴¹The Women’s Society for Christian Service was formerly the Woman’s Home Mission Society.

yet started, and teacher salaries remained an unresolved concern of the college. The salary issue affected Bennett's ability to retain its teaching talent and support them in attaining advanced degrees. With all its challenges, Jones reported that Bennett College remained within its budget.¹⁴²

Jones began his 1948-1949 report to the Board of Trustees announcing that Reynolds Residence Hall construction was completed, and that the new Student Union Building was now under construction. Student enrollment remained constant at approximately 500 students. The college, at this point, made a conscious decision to be selective in admitting students. This strategy allowed Bennett to avoid student acceptance simply to fill a quota. Therefore, Bennett College was able to implement an admission policy that "improve[d] the quality of students ... admitted." For the 1947-48 academic year, student representation was from more than half the country's 48 states and 2 foreign countries. Nearly half of its 246 students were from North Carolina, and from urban areas. Parents of the students were reported from the full employment spectrum; they were "skilled and unskilled workers," "farmers, teachers, ministers, businessmen, government and professional workers." And in an effort to ensure the college became a "national college," Bennett put in place mechanisms to maintain contact with alumnae and engage them in the admissions screening and selection process.¹⁴³

¹⁴²"To the Trustees of Bennett College," 1948-1949, Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for Women from David Dallas Jones, 7, Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Report (Treasurer's) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives. Jones to Arnett, October 1, 1929, Box 116, Folder 1053, Series 116, FA058, General Education Board records (GEB), Rockefeller Archive Center. In this letter Jones references frequent faculty turnover as a result of the college's meager salaries. Jones to Madison, January 16, 1940, Folder 4178, Box 398, Series 1, FA058, General Education Board records (GEB), Rockefeller Archives Center. This letter references Flemma Kitrell's resignation from Bennett College to go to Hampton Institute (University) as Dean of Women; therefore, Jones wanted to elevate Jetton to the Dean of Women position. Both letters speak to a persistent shortage of funds for faculty salaries.

¹⁴³"To the Trustees of Bennett College," 1948-1949 Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for women from David Dallas Jones, Report to Board of Trustees, Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones

With the goal of improving the experience of college education for its students, Bennett's administration and faculty clarified and articulated their thinking about the needs of the students. The two-pronged approach involved studying research findings of authorities working on women's education. They also sought guidance from leaders and specialists familiar with problems of women's education. Among those consulted were Dr. Constance Warren, President Emeritus, Sarah Lawrence College; Dr. W.W. Charters, Stephens College; Dr. Earl McGrath, Teachers College Institute of Higher Education; and Dr. Wilford Atkin. In addition, the college asked for feedback from alumnae and current students to get an understanding of the experience of the women served by Bennett College, from retrospective and current viewpoints.¹⁴⁴

At the October 22, 1955 meeting of Bennett's Board of Trustees, David Dallas Jones was named President Emeritus, just three months prior to his death. He requested the Board appoint Dr. Willa Beatrice Player to the presidency of Bennett College for Women.¹⁴⁵ Player was one of Jones's most valuable assets; during her years of service, Player worked arduously to establish "standards and goals" to effect the necessary changes that would advance Bennett's admissions process and academic program. Becoming president in October 1955, Dr. Player gave administrative leadership to Bennett College for a period of eleven years. These years witnessed the most visible protest activity of the Civil Rights Movement, and her students were actively involved. Under Player's leadership, enrollment continued to increase, as did the college's

Papers Report (Treasurer's) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), 2. Dr. David Dallas Jones Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹⁴⁴"To the Trustees of Bennett College," 1948-1949 Report to the Trustees of Bennett College for women from David Dallas Jones, 4, Box 17, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers Report (Treasurer's) Report to Board of Trustees (1939-1949), Dr. David Dallas Jones Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives. Marvin Howe, "Earl J. McGrath, Education Chief Under 2 Presidents," *The New York Times*, February 5, 1993.

¹⁴⁵"The Inauguration: New Vistas," *Bennett College Bulletin* 24, no. 4 (November 1956): 4-8.

endowment; the number of full time faculty increased, as well as their attainment of advanced academic credentials; in addition, improvements and additions to the college's physical plant were made.¹⁴⁶ The signature accomplishment of Player's leadership was admission to SACS membership, in 1957. Admission made Bennett College one of the first fifteen Negro four-year colleges to be admitted.¹⁴⁷ The skill and capability learned as an education leader is evident in Player's invitation to consult on the North Carolina subcommittee in preparation for the White House's Conference on Education near the end of her presidency.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

Player called the liberal arts colleges of the South "bulwark[s] of freedom in American life" because of their ability to resist political control. Nonpublic institutions were better able to resist control from public officials because they were not totally dependent on state funding, as were their public counterparts. During Player's tenure at Bennett College, the forces that shaped her administration included "the Methodist Episcopal Church, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), and the Civil Rights Movement."¹⁴⁹ The Methodist Church and UNCF brought a natural set of values to Bennett College that, when brought together, fit with the movements of the 1960s. Bennett College had been preparing its students for tasks such as these since the fall of

¹⁴⁶Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 150.

¹⁴⁷Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 171.

¹⁴⁸Letter to Bennett students from President Willa B. Player, August 1965, Box 5, Folder: 254, Willa B. Player Student Leadership conference 1965-1966, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹⁴⁹Brown, *The Long Walk*, 23.

1926. She asserts it was there at Bennett College that the “Christian, democratic, and humanitarian ideals of service and integrity” merged with the mission of the UNCF to “educate African American youth for success and service.” Player considered these values a “perfect base” for the ideals embodied in the CRM, “ideals of liberty, integrity of the individual, equity of treatment under the law, the passive resistance techniques of Gandhi and King, and the Christian emphasis of sacrifice and service.”¹⁵⁰

During this thirty-year period, Bennett emphasized training its students for “survival, leadership and a quality of life in a hostile environment”; it also strove to provide students with “encouragement, learning experiences and [the] moral stamina” they would need to face the times in which they lived. Player quoted the slogan of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in her 1963 address to the faculty, stating, “Action without study is folly, but study without action is futile.”¹⁵¹ To Player, it was more important for Bennett to prepare its students for life than to simply talk about the emancipation of women.

Much of the tone of Player’s presidency was set during Jones’s administration, when she acted as his right hand. In an undated letter to students interested in Bennett College, Jones noted that, “at Bennett, our concept of education is that home, citizenship, church and school are parts of one grand whole. We believe in standards of character, morality, scholarship and achievement. We encourage independent thinking among Bennett students.”¹⁵² It is clear from its published literature that Bennett College had no intention to produce college graduates who went along with the status quo, as Player

¹⁵⁰Brown, *The Long Walk*, 93, 158. Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 147.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁵²Brown, *The Long Walk*, 91.

believed, “education at Bennett College must mean for every young woman enrolled: self-discovery, career fulfillment, and civic responsibility.”¹⁵³

At her inauguration on October 14, 1956, Player stated,

I accept the presidency of Bennett College ... with an expressible depth of gratitude, with full awareness of the grave responsibility of the office, and with a firm resolve to devote every resource at my command to bring to fuller fruition the ideals and purposes for which this college stands.¹⁵⁴

Player’s inauguration made her the first Black woman to serve as president of a four-year liberal arts college in the United States. After her installation as the second president of Bennett College for Women, Willa Beatrice Player pledged her “full strength and unfaltering devotion” to keep Bennett College “among that small group of innovators whose bold and imaginative thinking has always moved mountains without counting the cost.” More than 2,000 people attended Player’s inauguration in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel, and more than 200 representatives from colleges and universities, learned societies, and professional organizations, the Methodist Church, and Bennett’s graduates were present. Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and a Bennett College Trustee, presided over the inauguration ceremony. Dr. Player’s speech, entitled “New Vistas,” focused attendees’ attention on the pillars that would guide her presidency.¹⁵⁵ She envisioned that higher education for women at Bennett College would

help each student to come to a full sense of her identity as a person and create a climate in which each may gain release from the prison of self; develop new criteria for the choice of careers; reexamine the moral, social and cultural aspect of campus life; provide competence, responsible participation and liberty for every student. Ours ... will be the task of sending out graduates equipped in every respect to help release from

¹⁵³Ibid., 102.

¹⁵⁴“The Inauguration: New Vistas,” *Bennett College Bulletin* 24, 5-6.

¹⁵⁵“The Inauguration: New Vistas,” 4-5.

bondage a region enslaved with the chains of hate and segregation, and to lead forth a people into the full understanding and realization of their rights, privileges and responsibilities as citizens of America's envisioned democracy.¹⁵⁶

Player concluded her remarks by indicating, "At this point, there can be no standing still, no compromise, no equivocation,"¹⁵⁷ words that would ring true as Bennett's students became the initiators, strategists, and sustainers of desegregation efforts in Greensboro, North Carolina during the 1960s.

Understanding the history of the institution, its origins, its purpose for being reorganized as a college for women, and the resources its leadership had to effect change and enact the college's mission has laid the foundation for moving forward to examine how Bennett's curriculum revision and the development of its co-curricular program contributed to the college's commitment to re-envision Black women's role, place, and voice in American society.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 6.

Chapter IV
RE-ENVISIONING BLACK WOMEN'S ROLE
AND PLACE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Introduction

This chapter explores how Bennett College for Women re-envisioned the role, place, and voice of Black women in early twentieth century America through its revision of the curriculum and development of its co-curricular activities. In this chapter, I focus on the college's curriculum, its co-curricular activities, and the annual Home Making Institute (HMI). The Institute is included in this chapter because this is where it fits best. It is in the planning of the HMI that the shift in Bennett's philosophy about women's education and careers is seen. While it was an open forum with guests invited from outside the college, it supplemented the college's curriculum, and all students were required to participate. I argue here that it is through the evolution and development of the curriculum and co-curricular activities that Bennett re-envisioned Black women's role, place, and voice in an effort to ensure that its students were active and participatory citizens engaged in the democratic process of our country. Bennett's curriculum revision, implemented in the 1940s; and the development of its co-curricular program addressed the concerns raised by administrators and scholars interested in Black women's education experience, and what their education prepared them to do once they completed college.

I discuss David Dallas Jones's vision, how he along with his leadership team viewed the role of the college, its responsibility to its students, and its relationship to the

Greensboro community. Also discussed is Bennett's concern about the quality of instruction and the content of its curriculum, and how that curriculum prepared its students for life after college. I analyze the increase in courses offered to students over the three decades, and the college's focus on improving instruction to improve the quality of students admitted, the quality of teachers it produced, and by default increase the educational attainment of Black communities throughout the South. Also addressed are the college's views on student-centered education, and its Home Making Institute, a staple of the curriculum tied to its association with the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society.

Bennett College Re-envision Black Women's Role, Place, and Voice

When you educate a man you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman you educate a family.¹

Constance Martena, a teacher in the librarian certificate program at Bennett, penned the above words in her October 1938 *Opportunity Journal* article, "A College for Girls."² The article, published the same year Bennett's students organized and executed a movie theatre boycott, discusses the work of educators at Bennett College. In discussing the college, Martena indicated that it "operated for the past twelve years exclusively for women," and that Bennett's curriculum was "geared to provide its students the type of education that not only will make them intelligent, alert and progressive, but that will go

¹Constance Martena, *A College for Girls*, *Opportunity Journal of Negro Life* 16 no. 10 (October 1938): 306-307.

²Constance Hill Martena, an alumna of Hampton Institute (University), served as the librarian at Bennett College for thirty years. She also served as president of the North Carolina Negro Library Association (1952-1954), and on the editorial board of the *Library Service Review*. She received her master's degree from the University of Chicago and was married to Jerald Milton Martena, Dean of Engineering at NCA&T.

a long way towards helping them establish worthwhile homes and happy families as well.” Marteena indicated that Bennett’s president, David Dallas Jones believed

that there is a definite place in our education scheme for a college exclusively for girls. He has envisioned Bennett as a place where young women might have the opportunity to discover themselves, and to learn and grow in the best possible environment.³

In her opinion, the college’s curriculum was “organized ... to surround each student with wholesome and inspiring influences.” At the time she wrote, the college had four major divisions in which students enrolled: Biological and Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Home Economics, and the Humanities. Marteena highlighted Bennett College’s signature course, the “Art of Living,” which all Bennett Belles were required to take. The course, offered by the Home Economics Department, was an orientation to living standards at Bennett College and aimed “to give a comprehensive idea and appreciation of life in its everyday setting.” It covered issues including “personal hygiene, costume art, personality development, the use of time and money, and family and community life.”⁴ Over time it expanded to assist students with their personal problems, “getting along with other people, etiquette and the social graces,” issues at that time deemed by the college as necessary for young women to live fulfilling and productive lives.⁵ While the college’s extracurricular activities were those typically found on college campuses, “the usual religious, social, and study clubs,” Bennett also offered groups “devoted to community,

³Marteena, “A College for Girls,” 306.

⁴Marteena, A College for Girls, 306-307.

⁵Willa B. Player, “A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference” 20, no. 1 (August 1948): 6-18. The *Art of Living* was later published in booklet form and included standards, procedures, and guidelines for students as they transitioned to college life at Bennett. The *Art of Living* was preceded by the *Bennett College Blue Book* from the 1930s through the late 1950s.

recreational, and civic work.” Marteenah concluded, “Bennett has won for itself a definite and important place in the field of Negro education.”⁶

In 1933, Slowe observed that “Negro women” attending college during the early decades of the twentieth century came from segregated communities where they, like their parents before them, were not allowed to participate in the civic life of the community, they could not exercise their right to vote, nor were they able to “participate in the responsibilities of government in their city or state.” Despite the fact that they paid taxes as citizens, they were not allowed to have a voice in determining how taxes were spent. Decisions were made on their behalf and without their input. Additionally, Slowe noted that the homes from which these women students came were extremely conservative in their views on “women’s place in the world”; despite the fact that “modern conditions have forced many women to be economically, politically, and socially independent,” families continued to believe their daughters to be “adjuncts of ‘man,’” even though “modern life” had forced them to live and act as individuals, the same way men did.⁷

Bennett College, under the leadership of David Dallas Jones and Willa Beatrice Player, worked to realize the vision of the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society (MWHMS) in building a college that addressed the needs of Black women in the segregated South. The college accomplished this mission by revising its curriculum, a curriculum inherited from the days when it was a coeducational institution focused on producing teachers and ministers to educate and lead the freedmen toward full citizenship rights. In conjunction with revision of the curriculum, Bennett College developed its co-curricular offerings to ensure that it included activities that built skills, expanded

⁶Marteenah, “A College for Girls,” 306-307.

⁷Lucy D. Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women.” *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1933): 356. Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Era Before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148-149.

students' knowledge base, and provided insights into problem solving and the political negotiation process as they worked to solve real-world problems. The results of these efforts allowed Bennett College's students to put their education into action over the course of the thirty years studied for this project.

Curricular Change and Co-Curricular Development

In its first year as an institution solely for women, 1926-27, college coursework included English, Math, Science, American History, and Bible. Students could choose among several electives, including foreign language, teacher training, biology, household arts, European history, and sociology.⁸ The college employed twelve faculty members, excluding the college Physician and President. Of these, ten had attended HBCUs for their undergraduate education; only one faculty member held a Master's degree.⁹

Beginning in the 1930s, as the College phased out the provision of high school education, Bennett's leadership developed and articulated their specific mission and purpose in the field of women's education. Ideas and opinions were published in the quarterly *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*. Throughout the decade, articles focused on several issues pertinent to the college's future, the incorporation of student activities, and its relevance to the college's curricula. The issues included improving teaching, the relationship between the college and its community, and the significance of Bennett as a single-sex institution. Among the college's priorities was ensuring the availability of scholarship funds for students with a financial need, and that the college could provide sufficient salaries and sabbaticals for faculty so they could support themselves and pursue

⁸Bennett College, *Bennett College for Women Circular of Information*, (Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College, 1926), 14-15.

⁹*Ibid.*, 5.

graduate education. These measures would ensure that the college attracted and retained a high-quality faculty and offered its education to as many students as possible.¹⁰

Bennett College revised its curriculum and co-curricular activities to prepare its students for the modern world – to face issues confronting Black women and the Black community, but also issues faced by all members of American society, and then made space for their students to engage with American society.

Curricular Change

During its early years, the vocational needs of Bennett students were met largely through the program of teacher education, as nearly 90% of its graduates became teachers in small towns and rural areas in North Carolina. As teachers, the first graduates made a “substantial contribution toward improving the quality of living in the communities where they worked.”¹¹ In the 1930s, Bennett undertook its first effort to improve the quality of instruction it provided to students. This was in response to concerns, expressed by former students who had become teachers, about the quality of instruction they had received. Their feedback helped Bennett College recognize the role HBCUs played in producing the majority of Black teachers for primary and secondary schools throughout

¹⁰“What of the Future?,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 2, (October 1931): 1-3. Harriet Ida Perkins, “Growing Up Through Students Activities,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 2 (October 1931): 11-14. Thomas F. Holgate, “Why Bennett College for Women?,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 10-11. Alice G. Taylor, “Improving College Instruction,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 12-13. “Attaining Standards,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 14-16. “Curricular Changes at Bennett College for Women,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 9, no. 4 (May 1934): 7-9. James T. Morton, “The Relationship of the College to its Community,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 12, no. 7 (December 1937): 1-9. William J. Trent, “Editorial,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 12, no. 7 (December 1937): 10-11. Merze Tate, “The Justification of a Women’s College,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 12, no. 7 (December 1937): 12-16. Willa B. Player, “Campus Notes,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 12, no. 7 (December 1937): 17-20.

¹¹Willa B. Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, September 1946, 20, no. 1 (August 1948): 6-18.

the South, and to acknowledge that the students enrolling in HBCUs were the products of the instructors who graduated from their institutions.¹²

Bennett sought to improve the quality of its instruction as a way to improve the pool of talent from which it admitted undergraduate students. In doing this, Bennett improved the quality of their students and the teachers who went out to teach in primary and secondary schools,¹³ thereby improving, with each year, the educational attainment of Black citizens and students throughout the South. Bennett also sought to understand the “status of its teaching” and ways it could be improved.¹⁴ The college used a three-pronged approach in its first attempts to assess its teaching. First, instructors engaged in a self-rating; second, teachers were observed and assessed by administrators; and last, the opinions of its senior class were sought. The point of this exercise was to understand teaching difficulties before exploring and suggesting improvements.¹⁵

In addition to focusing on the quality of instruction, in 1939, Bennett began the process of revising its curriculum. Plans to revise the curriculum were an effort on the college’s behalf to ensure its continued life.¹⁶ The college made what they felt at the time were “significant changes” to the curriculum, believing that the changes made would have possibilities for a “program of education of women in America.”¹⁷ Since 1939, the college engaged in an extensive study of women’s education in an attempt to develop a curriculum of “real significance.” As a result of this study, changes were made to address issues of concern rated as important to its students. Those issues included earning a

¹²“Attaining Standards,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 15-16.

¹³*Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁴“Improving College Instruction,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 12.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁶Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College*, 18.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

living, mental and physical health, communications, home and family life, and community leadership. Courses were planned with the intention of relating the subject matter to life outside the classroom. College faculty maintained their focus on improvement of the program of studies, and frequent assessment and evaluation of its impact. The goal was to develop a curriculum that permitted students to learn practical skills, rather than for a particular career. Bennett's leadership believed this would help students formulate a satisfactory philosophy of life.¹⁸

In 1932 and 1935, respectively, the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools recognized Bennett as an accredited institution and subsequently awarded it an "A" rating. As early as 1932, Bennett's administration had warned its community about becoming complacent with ratings awarded by accrediting boards and agencies. While recognition was an acknowledgement of the support these institutions provided to members of the Black community pursuing higher education, they warned against institutions exulting in that recognition and becoming complacent and stagnant, and ultimately failing to push forward toward higher standards in the education of the Black population.¹⁹ The unnamed author cautioned,

Standards after all are minimum requirements. Standards say in effect that this is the least you can do: Your teachers have done a certain amount of graduate work; your laboratories have reached a certain minimum. Your buildings have come to certain objective requirements. Your library has a circulation of books meeting certain minimum requirements. Your teachers are being paid a minimum living wage out of which they have given themselves certain minimum advance. Having met these things, a rating board then says this and nothing more: You have reached these minimum requirements. It seems that your students ought to have received something

¹⁸*Bennett College Bulletin, 1950-1951* 21, no. 3, (August 1950): 23. Letter to Robert M. Lester; January 3, 1942, Box 56, Folder: Bennett College 1933-1955, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

¹⁹"Attaining Standards," *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 14.

from the whole process that will inspire them to good work if they should go to a graduate school for further study.²⁰

Further, the author noted that the “B” rating awarded to Bennett in 1932 merely signified that the college had scratched the surface; there was more to do to develop the college and its environment into an institution that met the needs of its student body and the community in which it existed and purported to serve. Issues identified as those the college needed to improve included facilities, teaching staff, campus atmosphere and culture, library holdings, classroom space and equipment, scholarship support for students, support for faculty members in the form of housing, and sabbatical leaves to further their education and prevent attrition. These were the issues Jones sought to address through his fundraising efforts, with the support of Willa B. Player in her role as Registrar. The college also discouraged courtesy ratings. Acknowledging that “A” ratings have paved the way for some of their alumnae to pursue graduate study, those students who did pursue graduate education were overrepresented in the Social Sciences and Education. Representation among the natural and physical sciences, new fields for women to pursue as career options, needed to be increased.²¹

Bennett eschewed the tendency of HBCUs that “continually [had students] on parade” demonstrating their “ability to do manual labor, and to appear well in public.” It was the college’s position that this action needlessly separated students from their studies to please those who felt “that a Negro student busy at his books presented an outlandish appearance.” Acknowledging that this line of thinking had diminished, the college believed it was well past time for HBCUs to make scholarship the main focus of the college experience. As evidenced by their efforts to improve college instruction, Bennett acknowledged that “more learning” required “more teaching” and believed that, beyond the attainment of an “A” rating, the “Negro college must devote all of its energies” to

²⁰“Attaining Standards,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 14.

²¹*Ibid.*, 14-15.

inspiring students to advance generation after generation, and ensure they were capable of, and interested in, “inquir[ing] into our social and economic problems” and encouraging scholarship.²²

In the 1930s, women’s colleges provided a traditional education “offering the same courses and requiring the same standards of excellence” to “prove an intellectual equality with men.” Bennett believed that future trends in woman’s education should focus on “equipping young women with information, attitudes and techniques on how to live successfully.” The College envisioned itself, making a unique contribution to its students by equipping and qualifying them for positions of leadership in their communities. In fall 1933, while Player was Registrar, a Committee on Curricular Revision was empowered to begin reviewing its curricular offerings. Its goal was to “vindicate ... Negro education” from the criticisms lodged against it. Chief among the criticisms was that HBCUs failed to meet the “demands of ... present day society” in educating current and future generations of students. Bennett, while no longer providing an education leading to a specific vocation, sought to ensure that its graduates had “vocational possibility” and “a philosophy of life.”²³

Initially, small changes to the curriculum were made, including the addition of a survey course in library science, as new teachers found this a useful skill in the schools in which they worked; new recreational and physical education courses were designed to engage students for the full four years of study; freshman math became an elective rather than required, and a noncredit math course was offered for students who needed basic math skills. This was an early attempt to respond to students’ education needs. The college continued over the years to assess the curriculum for changes to meet its students’ education needs. One area Bennett felt a strong compulsion toward was adding emphasis

²²“Attaining Standards,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 15-16.

²³“Curricular Changes at Bennett College for Women,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 7.

to the need to develop “knowledge of minority group techniques.” This effort was directed at keeping students focused on and engaged in “maintain[ing] [a] group consciousness and responsibility.” This curricular modification evidenced elements of service to community and race uplift, traits associated with Black women’s articulated role and place in American society.²⁴

Bennett sought to develop a curriculum that prepared its students for the lives they would face after leaving college; its leadership criticized the “student centered” approach advocated by many of their contemporaries, believing it was a “way of making the student fit into a mold,” and making them the “recipient of what is supposed to be ‘best education practice,’” instead of actively engaging the student to interact with the college and surrounding community. Bennett viewed this version of a student-centered educational philosophy as “unsound” and believed it contributed to a “decline in the usefulness of ... education institution[s].” Bennett believed that the purpose of a liberal arts education was “to prepare the student in various areas of endeavor, [and] to teach the student to think so that he may better solve problems.” The college believed “a true student centered approach” necessitated an acknowledgement that “life outside of and after college” presents students with “problems that demand [an] effective solution.” An effective education would equip students to assess problems and develop “effective techniques” to resolve them. In order to adequately prepare its students, the college felt it necessary to include, along with the curriculum, opportunities for its students to engage in problem solving. Bennett’s student-centered approach involved engaging the entire college family in the process and discovering effective ways to get a maximum return from the “investment of time, energy, knowledge and forbearance.” If done effectively, the results would be evident in its effect on graduates’ lives.²⁵

²⁴“Curricular Changes at Bennett College for Women,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 7.

²⁵Trent, “Editorial,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 10-11.

Every element of the college, “the administration, faculty, students; physical and material resources, buildings and natural beauty of the campus, ... synchronize[d] into an unique educational philosophy which [was] widely acknowledged as ‘The Way of Life at Bennett College.’”²⁶ The college was built on “fundamental core ideas,” which served as a “central motivating force.” They were the medium through which its ideals were expressed. Chief among them was “its faith in the democratic ideal.” The ideal “respects the dignity and worth of every individual” and a belief in each person’s “capacity to make a worthwhile contribution toward improving [the] human experience.” Recognizing this, the college believed it must give attention to “meeting the needs of individual students.”²⁷

One way Bennett introduced students to the ideal was through its Home Economics Department. The department offered an orientation course, the “Art of Living.” By the late 1950s, the college produced a brochure that codified the standards, rules, and regulations at Bennett. Action programs developed from this course included the Clothes Hospital. Here students could get old garments altered or repaired, or make new clothing “in appropriate colors” to improve their personal appearance. The college also had a Clothing Clinic that stressed “good grooming, appropriate dress and a poised and gracious manner – qualities of refinement which give distinction and charm to personality.”²⁸

²⁶Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 8.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁸Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 9. Willa B. Player, “Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project” (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 3. *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures*, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1959. “*The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures*,” Greensboro, North Carolina, 1960. *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures*, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1962. Documentation may have existed prior to the 1959 “Art of Living”; however, I was unable to locate a copy in Bennett’s archive.

Bennett believed that “a college must do more than provide classroom knowledge”; it should be “a community of purposeful living experiences,” and those experiences “should contribute proportionately to the growth and development of the whole person.” Bennett viewed the entirety of college life as “a part of the educational experience,” and periodically asked itself the question, “What difference does it make?” in an effort to determine if its “way of life” produced changes in the lives of its students, and by extension the community, for the common good.²⁹ The college also endeavored to maintain a “democratic atmosphere,” where “the best learning is inspired” through the collaboration between “students and faculty” who work to achieve common goals.³⁰ From the college’s perspective, “true democracy” is demonstrated by the way individuals accept responsibility for “the little tasks.” Therefore, Bennett stressed the importance and attention to attending to the “little things.”³¹

Dr. Player’s dissertation was a result of Bennett’s curricular revision. It focused on the College’s Self-Study completed in the early 1940s, and the subsequent curriculum revision at Bennett. She stated that the objectives of the college were

derived from the core ideas to which the administration and the faculty have adhered since 1926 ... the belief that in a college, the most important person is the individual student; [and that] ... the college laid emphasis on meeting the needs of its students as individuals.³²

She continued,

The college has stressed the importance of religion as an aspect of daily living.... The college has striven to uphold the principle that truly purposeful education should function in action; [and that] ... there has been an effort to

²⁹Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 10.

³⁰Ibid., 11.

³¹Ibid., 12.

³²Player, “Improving College Education,” 3, iv.

maintain a democratic atmosphere on the campus, so that students and faculty may work together for the achievement of common goals.³³

Last, she said, “An educational institution is obligated to contribute to the life of the community of which it is a part.”³⁴

Periodically, Bennett restated its philosophy to meet the needs of the college community. The essence of Bennett’s past traditions was remolded to enhance the meaning of Bennett’s “way of life.”³⁵ By the 1950s, early efforts to redefine what college education at Bennett College should be for Black women was refined and restated as:

To provide opportunities for growth in religious thought to the end that certain principles will be made to occupy a definite place in the experience of the student; to provide ample opportunities and experiences in daily living that will stimulate practice in the art and science of homemaking; to provide an environment and facilities that will make for the physical fitness of the student and develop in her an appreciation for a healthy mind and body; to insure adequate preparation in specialized fields that will make possible the successful pursuit of a given vocation; to develop in the student an understanding of and appreciation for the cultural and scientific achievements of man; to stimulate an appreciation for the beautiful in everyday living as well as in the arts; to provide varied types of recreation to satisfy the need for play and to give direction in the proper use of leisure time; to develop in the student an understanding of social problems and to stimulate in her the desire to aid in their solution.³⁶

To understand the specific changes Bennett implemented during this period, several Bennett College publications detailing course requirements for the bachelor’s degree were reviewed. My review reveals the college’s changing curriculum between 1930 and 1960. Catalogs were chosen, from those available, at roughly ten-year

³³Player, “Improving College Education,” 3, iv.

³⁴Ibid., 3-4.

³⁵Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 18.

³⁶Bennett College Bulletin, 1950-1951, 21, no. 3, August 1950, 7-8. Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 19.

intervals.³⁷ In the first catalog selected for review, 1929-1930, the college is described as having been arranged into eight departments.³⁸ By the time the 1939-1940 catalog was published, the college had been reorganized into four divisions. Those divisions, as Marteen noted in 1938, were the Humanities, Biological and Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Home Economics. Over the course of this thirty-year period the number of course offerings increased from approximately 70 to over 230 detailed in the *1958-1960 Bennett College Bulletin*. Overall the college's curricular offerings expanded significantly over the decades, with most of the growth occurring in the decade between 1930 and 1940, the decade during which the high school curriculum was discontinued and the full four-year college program was implemented. This is the same decade during which Willa Beatrice Player served as the Registrar and headed the Committee on Curricular Revision.³⁹

In the Humanities, course offerings increased from 20 to 89 courses (345 percent increase) between the 1929-1930 and 1958-1960 catalogs. The largest gains were in English (12 courses), Music (14 courses), and Dramatics (8 courses). Increases in the Music and Dramatics course offerings are significant in light of the 1933 publication of Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. In it Woodson denounced the fact

³⁷The following Bulletins were used to review, at approximately ten-year intervals, curricular changes over the period under study here: *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 5, no. 1 (April 1929). *Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1939-1940*, 13, no. 2. *Bennett College Bulletin: The Instructional Program*, 28, no. 1 (November 1946). *Bennett College Bulletin: General Information*, 28, no. 2 (February 1947). *Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Issues 1958-1960*, 26 (August 1959). *Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Supplement 1960-1961*, 27, no. 3 (August 1960).

³⁸*Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 5, no. 1, (1929), 18.

³⁹Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (New York: AMS Press, 1933), 70,74-75, 79. *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalog Number 1933-1934* 9, no. 3 (1934), 36-62. *Bennett College Bulletin of Catalogue Number 1936-1937*, 11, no. 2 (1936), 19-65. *Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 13, no. 2 (1938), 17-68. *Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1940-1941*, 14, no. 1, (1940), 19-72.

that Black Americans were dissuaded from pursuing serious study of music and drama as professionals. He acknowledged that Black performers lacked growth in perfecting their art, and that their “dancing, joking, and minstrelsy” were the appropriate indicators to White society that they were in their proper place. These were precisely the types of acting roles Bennett students took a stand against in 1938 when they planned and executed a boycott of two Greensboro movie theaters. Woodson also noted, “Negroes ... learned from their oppressors to say to their children that there were certain spheres into which they should not go because they would have no chance therein for development.” This served to dissuade Black children from aspiring to reach beyond the roles society allowed them to fill and be kept in their place.⁴⁰

In the Biological and Physical Sciences, the number of courses increased from 12 to 49 (308 percent). The largest course increases were in Biology (12 courses), Physics (10 courses), Chemistry (8 courses), and Mathematics (13 courses). In the Social Sciences, course offerings increased from 26 courses to 75 (188 percent). The largest increases were in Psychology (10 courses), Sociology (10 courses), History (7 courses), Bible/Religion (7 courses), and Political Science (3 courses). This increase included three of the subjects Slowe expressed concern about – Sociology, Psychology, and Political Science; Economics is the only subject missing. Finally, Home Economics grew from 11 to 23 courses (109 percent), with Clothing and Textiles, and Food and Nutrition courses increasing by 8 courses each.⁴¹ During this same period, the College’s faculty and staff complement grew from 21 faculty and staff in 1929-1930 to 83, which included 44 faculty and 39 staff members by the publication of the 1958-1960 *Bulletin*.⁴²

⁴⁰Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 70,74-75, 79.

⁴¹There was an eleven-course decrease in Home Economics, all education courses; at the time education was classified in Social Sciences. Slowe, “Higher Education of the Negro Woman,” 355.

⁴²*Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 20-33. *Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1939-1940*, 19-67. *Bennett College Bulletin: The Instructional Program*, 5-50.

In Player's 1948 dissertation, she noted that at Bennett, prior to 1940, the educational program closely followed "the traditional pattern existing in the liberal arts colleges which were engaged in teacher education." Although four divisions had been organized, courses were arranged in several different departments, making little time or opportunity for students to explore their own interests. Seeking to provide its students with "fundamental information and skills," Bennett established a curriculum that detailed the minimum graduation requirements. Students selected a major and a minor, which consisted of taking "a minimum of twenty-four and twelve semester hours respectively." Further, eighteen hours in the field of education were required to receive a "teachers certificate in North Carolina." After careful review, Player and the faculty at Bennett concluded that "the four-year course had little continuity" because students were intent on accumulating the "128 semester hours and the 128 quality points required for graduation." Their conclusion was that the knowledge being imparted to students "was cut up into segments, and administered in fragments which were quite unrelated to the student and her purpose." In her dissertation, Player assessed the College's curriculum problem as follows:⁴³

1. The program was highly subject centered.
2. Course offerings were concentrated within narrow departments which were relatively autonomous in deciding course content
3. Each student focused her attention from the beginning on the completion of three sets of requirements, namely, the general requirements for the degree, requirements for the major and minor subjects, and for the state certificate.
4. The excessive requirements offered no opportunity for free election or exploration in other fields,
5. A program in general education was attempted by a ramification of prescribed courses which were extremely lacking in unity.
6. It should be said that a Freshman and an Upper-Class Council reviewed the work of each student four times during the year in an effort to establish some relationship between the student's program and her needs and purposes.

Bennett College Bulletin: General Information, 21-26. *Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Issues 1958-1960*, 23-72. *Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Supplement 1960-1961*, 13-14.

⁴³Player, "Improving College Education," 54-57.

7. From time to time, sporadic efforts were made to relate the learnings (sic) of the students to real life situations. This was done mainly through the extra-curricular activities of the college such as club programs, chapel services, and open forums.⁴⁴

The result of this curricular design, they concluded, was a denial of opportunity for students to explore their interests or “to discover her capabilities in a field of her own choosing.” The prescribed education program, as designed, consumed too much of the students’ time. To rectify this issue, the college chose to reduce major requirements and utilize extracurricular offerings to supplement student learning and help students “develop skills and interests.” However, this did not resolve the problem, as high school principals began looking to hire Bennett alumnae for their versatility rather than their technical competence; additionally, faculty were forced to balance student interests with requirements of the field. The revised curriculum, in their opinion, highlighted the gap between “the instructional program of the college and its educational objectives.” It was for this reason that administrators and faculty “began to envision changes in the curricular program.”⁴⁵

Revisions made to the Bennett curriculum in the 1940s included:

1. The revision and reorganization of the content of the course offerings in the various subject-matter fields.
2. The establishment of a group of clinics as service centers to students.
3. The enlargement of the areas of specialization to provide for preparation in a wider variety of occupations.
4. The development of a “Handbook on Academic Advising” outlining the curricular offerings of the college.
5. The reorganization of the guidance procedures to bring about a more effective articulation between guidance and instruction.
6. The inclusion of extra-curricular activities in the curricular program.
7. The provision for exploration within the subject areas of the curriculum.
8. The introduction of new courses into the instructional program.
9. The provision for extended and enriched field study through the establishment of the Child Health School and the Community Program.

⁴⁴Ibid., 58.

⁴⁵Player, “Improving College Education,” 59-60.

10. The opening for election to all students of a group of courses in the division of home economics designed to offer preparation in home and family living.
11. The further development of the Home-Making Institute to encourage the study of homemaking as a career.
12. The reorganization of the requirements for graduation into a core of basic studies.⁴⁶

Bennett's desire to improve the curriculum reflects the need to use "life-centered activities and areas of knowledge" to improve its students' educational experience. The experiences provided were to "prepare students for intelligent participation in all of the areas of human relationship." Use of their planning tool, which they called a "functional outline," helped faculty visualize the attention given to the "areas of living" that had been decided based on alumnae and student survey results. Bennett established a core, item twelve on its list of curriculum revisions, which included courses that incorporated the following elements: Contemporary Problems, Composition and Speech, Health, General Literature, Religion and Philosophy, Physical Education, and Human and Intercultural Relations, in an effort to connect coursework to real life.⁴⁷

The core was to "help students develop the understanding, skills and appreciation necessary to meet their needs as persons participating in the life of their time." Courses

⁴⁶Ibid., 131-132.

⁴⁷Player, "Improving College Education," 162. Player, "Improving College Education," iv, 41, 39. Three hundred seventeen surveys were returned to the College (65%). Alumnae respondents were between the ages of 19 and 35, and had been out of the college between one and eleven years. Seventy-two percent lived in towns with populations between 5,000 and 25, 000. Forty-five percent were married, five percent were widowed, and three percent divorced; and thirteen percent had children. Eighty-six percent worked either full- or part-time, with only five percent unemployed. More than eighty percent of the employed worked as teachers. Percentages were: Community Leadership and Citizenship (81.9), Earning a Living (81.9), General Negro Problems (79.7), Consumer Education (79.5), Home and Family Life (78.5), Mental and Physical Health (77.4), and Communication (76.9). The remaining two were Recreation (72), and Religion and Philosophy of Living (68.3). Player, "Improving College Education," 178, 179, and 185. The 374 responses from approximately 390 undergraduates represented a 96 percent participation rate. Undergraduate respondents were between the ages of 15 and 23, had little to no out-of-school experience and had not worked outside the home. Half the undergraduates were from towns, forty-six percent from urban cities, and eleven percent from farms. Undergraduates rated that Earning a Living, General Negro Problems, and Home and Family Life needed more emphasis in the curriculum, each rated above 70%.

were designed to address the needs of the students in specific areas. Contemporary Problems was intended to develop students' critical thinking skills related to issues students faced in their relationship to society. Faculty were expected to "acquaint the student with the democratic tradition and how it functions in the modern world," as they believed it would help the student "appraise current social trends and problems, and to determine the traits and values which should characterize the American people."⁴⁸ Faculty anticipated that Composition and Speech would "contribute to the growth of students in communication skills," such as proper speech, communicating well in writing, and building critical listening skills. Health was to encourage "the acquisition of adequate health information, and the development of good health habits." General Literature was expected to "contribute to the growth of the student in her knowledge of what is worth while in life." Philosophy and Religion were to "enable the student to develop a sense of values, with the result that she will herself come to live a richer life"; and students were to determine what part Religion played in "active life situations," particularly how the life and teachings of Jesus serve as "resources for the solution of personal and social problems," versus its typical use as a behavioral control mechanism in Black communities. Philosophy concentrated on enabling the students to formulate "a Christian philosophy of life." Human and Intercultural Relations was intended to assist students in dealing with "the stresses and strains" of society and give them "an opportunity to study the influences of ethnic, creedal, and cultural groups on the culture, and the contribution of these groups to American life and thought." Health was intended to "stress both the acquisition of adequate health information and the development of good health habits."⁴⁹

⁴⁸Player, "Improving College Education," 129-130.

⁴⁹Player, "Improving College Education," 130-131.

Co-Curricular Development and Evolution

The development of Bennett's co-curricular program was a direct outgrowth of the curriculum revision of the 1940s, item six on the list of curricular revisions. The college embraced the idea of being a "co-operative community," where the students and faculty worked together "to live on terms of equality and mutual self-respect." As a new college, Bennett was not hindered by old traditions but was free to experiment, making it flexible enough to answer to the needs of students and transform their lives.⁵⁰ The college aimed to be a place where enrolled students were free to grow and develop into useful and intelligent citizens. The manner by which Bennett sought to accomplish this was engaging students in the process of self-government. This process entailed involving students in the development of rules that would govern student behavior. To prepare students for this responsibility, undergraduates received training in "exercising their powers of judgment" through participation in the student government process. The college viewed student government as the process through which students should learn to "discriminate between right and wrong."⁵¹

Bennett envisioned itself preparing students to cope with life in the segregated South and become change agents for the Black community. As early as the 1930s, the college offered a variety of campus-based activities to engage students to achieve this goal. These included Departmental Clubs, an International Relations Club, a Cosmopolitan Club, and the Why Club. Respectively, these clubs were expected to broaden students' interest in academic subjects; keep students abreast of world events; create an understanding of and sympathy for other races and nationalities; and seek "answers to social, economic and political problems of the day."⁵² Non-departmental

⁵⁰"What of the future?," *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 2.

⁵¹Harriet Ida Perkins, "Growing Up Through Students Activities," *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 11-12.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 12.

clubs included “literary, forensic and social clubs,” which gave students the opportunity to explore areas of interest. The Christian Association engaged students in social service work, including literacy training, hospital and nursing home visits to the elderly and infirmed, as well as engaging students in group discussion and thematic conferences. Additionally, Bennett paired juniors and seniors with freshmen and sophomores to “aid and advise” them as they transitioned to college life.⁵³

During this thirty-year period, Bennett offered its students several co-curricular activities. The college viewed “extra” as an add-on, and “co” as parallel, or in tandem to. It purposefully selected and used the term “co-curricular” in the 1940s as its way of communicating the linkage between classroom learning and the activities that engaged students outside the classroom that were closely aligned with the life they would live after college completion. This change was to “emphasize the union of activities outside of class and in class” in the creation of a seamless curriculum. The college believed both contributed to the intellectual development of the student as well as contributed to the development of their skills and abilities. Here Bennett’s view was similar to Slowe’s, in that activities outside of the traditional classroom setting served to provide students with valuable experiences that assisted them with adjusting to life and finding their role, place, and voice in American society once they completed their studies at Bennett College.⁵⁴

The college documented its use of co-curricular activities from its early years. By 1929-1930 academic year, the four activities listed in the 1920-1921 Bennett College Catalogue and Circular of Information – the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA),⁵⁵ Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), Literary Societies, and the

⁵³Harriet Ida Perkins, “Growing Up Through Students Activities,” *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 13.

⁵⁴Slowe, “The Colored Girl Enters College,” 279.

⁵⁵The YMCA ceased to exist on the campus once the college was converted to a women’s college.

Athletic Association – had grown to ten organizations that included the Dramatic Club, the Bennett Historians, the Queen Esther Circle, the Sociology Club, the Student Council, the YWCA, Sunday School, the Home Economics Club, Class Officers, and the Arts and Crafts Club. Each club served a purpose for Bennett’s students. The Dramatic Club acquainted “students with the great dramatists and actors of the world,” “promote[ed] better dramatics on the campus of Bennett College for Women,” and “develop[ed] an appreciation for good dramatics.” Students also learned “the art of play-giving by reproducing worthwhile plays,” with the ultimate goal of establishing “a ‘Little Theatre’” on Bennett’s campus where students could demonstrate their talent and skills, through performances, for the college and Greensboro community. This is significant in light of Woodson’s observation in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, and his critique of the lack of pursuit of formal training for Black actors and musicians. Students’ skills and talents were showcased annually as part of Bennett’s Home Making Institute and frequently throughout the year to the college and the Greensboro community.⁵⁶

The Bennett Historians provided an opportunity for students to “study history outside the classroom”; they read and reviewed “recent historical books,” took trips to local “places of interest, [and to] historical plays,” in addition to discussing “current topics.” The Sociology Club provided students a place and space in which to select and discuss “social problems and the [student developed problem solving] techniques” that could be used to correct them. Even the Home Economics Club, a club that readily invokes notions and visions of domestic efficiency, tranquility, and order, was used for a somewhat nontraditional purpose. It “emphasize[d] the home as a meeting ground for the arts, science and letters,” and encouraged students “to become acquainted with recent

⁵⁶Bennett College Catalogue and Circular of Information (June 1920), 12-13. *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 57-58. During the 1920-1921 academic year, Bennett College was still a coeducational institution.

investigations in nutrition, [and] family relations.”⁵⁷ The club made the home, women’s sphere, and an intellectual and creative space open to inquiry and experimentation, as an alternate site for education.

Among the other campus-based activities was the Student Council, the organization that governed student behavior and activity on the campus. Each class had two representatives on the Council and elected officers to represent them on the Council. The Sunday School, YWCA, and Queen Esther Society all had a religious aspect embedded in their mission. The Sunday School fostered religious thought, while the YWCA “stimulate[d] all girls to a love of beauty and goodness” and “foster[ed] an attitude of worship [that] encourage[d] a cosmopolitan interest in all people,” with the goal of assisting students to “experience [a] full and creative life.” Last, the Queen Esther Society, an extension of the Woman’s Home Mission Society (WHMS), sought to interest students in the work of the society, develop an understanding of the need for “missionary work in our country,” and learn “what is being done to meet it and to raise funds for such work.”⁵⁸

By 1939-1940, the beginning of a refinement of the college’s extra-curricular philosophy is evident in the Bulletin. The college stated,

The extracurricular program of Bennett College aims toward training young women for life in a democracy. This calls for an environment which is full of opportunities for the assumption of responsibility by each individual. Such an environment has been created through the program of activities.⁵⁹

⁵⁷*Bennett College Catalogue and Circular of Information* (June 1920), 12-13. *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 57-58. During the 1920-1921 academic year, Bennett College was still a coeducational institution.

⁵⁸*Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930*, 57-58.

⁵⁹*Bennett College Bulletin, Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 82.

The Student Council had been renamed the Student Government Association (SGA) and had the task of promoting “student participation in the regulation of campus life.” Its multipurpose goal was

to represent and further the best interest of the student body; to secure cooperation among the different student organizations; to promote responsibility and loyalty in the student body; to promote fellowship between faculty and students; and to have joint jurisdiction with the administration in the promotion and the regulation of student activities.⁶⁰

This entailed students working amongst themselves, with faculty and administrators, as well as the public. It helped students develop negotiation, planning, strategizing and organizing skills. Several religious activities were still present on the campus, and their focus was “to cultivate a sense of high ideals and spiritual values, and to interpret religious principles to its members and to the student group.” In addition to the Dramatic Club, the college added a Music Club as a co-curricular option. Its aim was to foster “cultural enjoyment and in developing teamwork.” The newest and most significant addition to co-curricular offerings was the creation of a student-run newspaper in the fall of 1930, *The Bennett Banner*. It served, and continues to serve, as “an organ for expression,” with the stated purpose:

to report the happenings on the campus and all news of interest concerning the college and student group; to furnish the students with practical experience in the business of conducting a student publication; and to afford opportunity for literary development and journalism.⁶¹

The Bennett Banner’s purpose was to “stimulate the interest of students in questions of academic freedom, peace, economic security, and equality.” Here we see the embedding of skill development in an activity fully operated by Bennett’s students. The paper served the purpose of disseminating knowledge and information, planning, and the development

⁶⁰Ibid., 82-83.

⁶¹*Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 83-85.

of research and writing skills. By October 1957, the *Bennett Banner*'s masthead included the following motto: "Believing that an informed campus is a Key to Democracy."⁶²

While the Athletics program had not been detailed in the 1929-1930 *Bennett College Catalogue and Circular of Information*, the college, by the late 1930s, was poised to foster "campus sports and outdoor recreation ... to support the physical and health education courses [in the newly revised curriculum] by providing a setting for wholesome living." And although lectures and conferences were an important aspect of the life of the college, as evidenced by the inclusion of a detailed list in each bulletin and catalog published through the 1940s, the 1939-1940 Bulletin states, "The extra-curricular program is enriched by a series of lectures and recitals provided annually by the college for the students and the community."⁶³ Also of note is the college's approval to establish a branch of the American Student Union (ASU) on campus in the 1937-1938 academic year, the same year Bennett's students planned and executed a movie theatre boycott. The ASU's mission was to mobilize students in support of "an extensive reform agenda" for youth in America and against the war. While it initially focused on domestic issues related to the Depression, the ASU later extended its protest and activism to include international issues, including World War II.⁶⁴

To make a meaningful change in its extracurricular offerings, Bennett reconceived it as a co-curricular program in the 1940s to give students the opportunity to practice problem solving on the campus. Bennett's students began taking full responsibility for

⁶²"Student Paper Enters Upon Second Year," *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women*, 7, no. 2, 4. *The Bennett Banner*, October 1957, 1.

⁶³*Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 83-85.

⁶⁴*Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 86. "Chapters Which Have Not Held Referendum," n.d., Box, 21, Folder: A.S.U.: National Executive Committee, undated; Papers of Joseph P. Lash Papers, Series II, Youth Organizations and Activities, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. "Organization News," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1939, 4. "What's in the News," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1938, 3. "Organization News," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1939, 3.

campus-based student activities in the 1944-1945 academic year. In the 1945-1946 academic year, its leadership with this student-led model hoped

to provide increased opportunity for individual student participation; to learn to live and work cooperatively; to create laboratories of self-expression; to provide opportunities for practicing desirable citizenship traits; to provide recreational, creational and cultural experiences; to aid in personality development.⁶⁵

Activities available to students included over 15 organizations. Among them were:

Student Senate, Bennett Banner Staff, Young Women's Christian Association, Women's Society of Christian Service (formerly WHMS), Sunday School, Orchestra, Choirs: Freshman, Choral Club, Senior Choir; Sociology Club, Home Economics Club, Book-Lover's Club, Marshals, Mid-Week Vesper Committee, Radio Committee, Woman's Athletic Association, Theatre Guilds: Freshman and Senior, President' (sic), Class and Dormitory Organizations.⁶⁶

Bennett intentionally integrated students into the governance structure of the college, and they were represented on all campus committees. In establishing the Student Senate, Bennett envisioned that it would encompass multiple purposes, among them, representing and furthering the interests of Bennett's student body, serving as a coordinating body for all campus based organizations, and working cooperatively with the administration to promote and regulate student activities. Additionally the Senate was one vehicle through which college spirit was promoted, and it served as an agent for the expression of student thought.⁶⁷

Student activities for the 1945-1946 year included an Endowment Drive, which raised \$712.41 in three weeks; Thanksgiving parties; Christmas Seals sale; and Christmas

⁶⁵"Report – 1945-46 Campus Services Committee," Box 14, Folder: Reports – College – Campus Services Committee (1945-1946), 1, Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁶⁶"Report – 1945-46 Campus Services Committee," Box 14, Folder: Reports – College – Campus Services Committee (1945-1946), 1, Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁶⁷Betty Artis and Joyce Edley, "Purposes of the Student Senate," Box 14 Public Relations – Public Relations, Bennett College Archives, Folder: Reports – College – Campus Services Committee (1945-1946), 1, Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

Sister Week. The college sent two delegates to represent Bennett at the Conference of Southern Students at Hampton Institute. Additionally, a representative from each class was sent on a tour of other Southern colleges to become aware of happenings on these campuses. Also held were the annual Mother's Day breakfast, Election Week activities with an emphasis on "good leadership," and last, the Senate published the 1946 Student Handbook.⁶⁸

During this year, the Student Senate replaced its War-Peace Program with the Post-War Program. This restructured program had four committees, including the Hobbies and Recreation Committee, which provided entertainment and recreational activities to servicemen and served as an outlet for student emotions related to the war and its aftermath; the Social Agencies Committee supported Post-War Rehabilitation organizations; the Nutrition and Child Care Committee emphasized physical fitness and good health in the post-war era; and the Current News Committee focused student attention on literature related to current world events. Students assessed the deficiencies of their own participation and called fellow students to task in carrying out responsibilities for their respective organizations and committees in the Student Senate.⁶⁹

By the latter half of the 1940s, the Student Council had become the Student Senate, and Bennett again restated its position on the co-curricular:

Bennett College believes that it should provide ample opportunity for each student to express herself and to encourage this expression in every area. The co-curricular program offers an infinite variety of possibilities for choice. It administers to the spiritual life of the student through the religious activities.... The Student Senate ... is the governing body which permits the young women to have an active voice in determining the regulations of campus life.... The Bennett student may explore her creative ability in many areas and then transmit it into reality through activities such as The Little

⁶⁸Ibid., 1-3.

⁶⁹Betty Artis and Joyce Edley, "Purposes of the Student Senate," Box 14 Public Relations – Public Relations, Bennett College Archives, Folder: Reports – College – Campus Services Committee (1945-1946), 1-3, Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

Theatre Guild, the College Choirs, the Orchestra, the Bennett Banner ... the radio programs and various clubs and interest groups. Through extensive series of Lyceum events the college each year is enriched by the presence of artists who appear in concert give their talents to develop keener appreciation in the student for the beauties of life.⁷⁰

Reviewing the changes between the 1939-1940, 1945-1946, and the 1958-1960 *Bennett College Bulletins*, a movement toward more specificity in terms of the skills and talents Bennett sought to cultivate in its students is visible. Whereas in 1939-1940 Bennett referred to the extracurricular program training its students for “life in a democracy,” and making opportunities available for “assumption of responsibility,” by 1945-1946, the college more explicitly stated its goals. They included living and learning cooperatively, student self-expression, practicing desirable citizenship traits, and provision of recreational, creative, and cultural experiences. By the end of the 1950s, the college focused on students being able to creatively express their thoughts and ideas by raising their voices to address issues of concern within the college community but also about issues external to the college. Those opportunities arose from their participation in campus-based organizations affiliated with national organizations.⁷¹

The sentiments expressed above in the 1958-1960 Bulletin are similar to those expressed by Slowe in her 1937 *Opportunity* article, “The Colored Girl Enters College – What Shall She Expect?” In this article, Slowe stated,

The extra-curricular if properly supervised can be as important in the development of the student as the curricula. Activities, arranged so that the student can demonstrate her ability to carry responsibility and to work harmoniously with the group, can be the means of strengthening character and of bringing out true moral worth. The student has a right to expect the college to assist her in coming in contact with those activities outside the

⁷⁰*Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Issues 1958-1960*, 75.

⁷¹*Bennett College Bulletin, Catalogue Number 1938-1939*, 82. “Report – 1945-46 Campus Services Committee,” Box 14, Folder: Reports – College – Campus Services Committee (1945-1946), 1, Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

classroom which will refine her taste, deepen her moral strength and send her out into the world a wholesome, helpful and dependable person.⁷²

By the late 1950s, Bennett College offered its students more than twenty co-curricular organizations, in addition to academic exchanges with other women's colleges, including Mount Holyoke, Sarah Lawrence, Skidmore College, Ohio Wesleyan, and Warren Willamette College.

The Home Making Institute

Bennett began hosting its annual Home Making Institute (HMI) during its first academic year as a college for women, 1926-1927. The reason for its origin can be found in the purposes for which the Methodist Woman's Home Mission Society was established in 1880. One of the Society's expressed goals was to send Christian women into "the homes of colored people" and work to establish Christian homes among them. The Society also endeavored to organize schools for the girls and women connected to the Methodist Church and other institutions.⁷³ Timing is also significant for understanding the HMI; in 1880, when the MWHMS was created, it was a time when there was an emphasis on women's domestic roles, their participation in the life of the church, and the "importance and prestige of education." These goals are evident in the themes of the HMI and their evolution over time.⁷⁴

Held on the college's campus, the HMI sought "to point up ... the responsibility of a college to work realistically within the mainstream of home and community life." Organized by the Home Economics Department, the HMI "was a campus-wide learning experience" that served several different purposes, including "outreach experiences in the community" and "enrichment of the personal life of the students." The HMI was begun to

⁷²Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," 278-279.

⁷³Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 125.

⁷⁴Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, 125.

ensure that Bennett's students and Greensboro community members would "understand and take their place in today's world." The Institute's goal was much broader than the term "homemaking" implied, as it "involved the entire campus" and represented "a working example of the holistic educational philosophy" at Bennett College. Supported by funding from the Phelps-Stokes Fund, Bennett hosted approximately forty HMIs between its first in 1927 and last in 1967.⁷⁵ Each spring the college brought to campus several prominent speakers from varied professional fields and occupations to address current issues of importance to the American people. Many issues and themes of the Institute addressed concerns specifically related to the Black community. However, a broad look reveals that the topics were relevant to a wide range of Americans. Although documentation for each of the 40 HMIs has not survived, the following is a synopsis of the Institutes with surviving documentation by decade.

Home Making Institutes in the 1930s had the following themes: "The Home and the New Deal," "Homemaking Education in High Schools," and "Child Development and Parent Education."⁷⁶ Under the theme of "The Home and the New Deal," Bennett's eighth HMI was held in May 1934. Its purpose was "to give the students of the college and the people of the community a fairer knowledge of homemaking, and at the same time, establish in them the sense of appreciation for home life." Topics addressed included the effects of the New Deal, religion and the home, child training, tuberculosis, and trends in the American family. Speakers included governmental employees, child

⁷⁵Louis Guenveur Street, *Home Economics 1980: A Golden Anniversary*, (Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College, 1980), 1. North Carolina Collection, Colleges and Universities - Bennett College, Greensboro Public Library. The HMI was last held in 1967, there were a total of 40. "Home-Making Institute '49 Features Career and Home," BB, March 1949, 1. Brown, *The Long Walk*, 110-111.

⁷⁶"Eighth Home-Making Institute Week," *Bennett Banner*, May 1934, 6. "The Eleventh Annual Home-Making Institute Week," Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. "Home-Making Institute is Held, *The Bennett Banner*, February 1939, 1.

specialists, medical professionals, and representatives from the Woman's Home Mission Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Presentations included "The Home and the New Deal," led by Forrester B. Washington; Mrs. Walter R. Brown, vice-president of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, discussed "Religion, the Unifying Force in the Home"; "Child Training" was presented by child specialist, Mrs. Julius Carroll; Dr. P. B. (Plummer Bernard) Young, editor of *The Norfolk Journal and Guide*, gave a talk on "Business and the Home"; and Dr. L. O. Miller, healthcare specialist, discussed "Tuberculosis in the Home." Sociology professor Glen Johnson, from Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, discussed "Trends in the American Family Today"; and Marylou Jackson and Gladys Thomas discussed "Music in the Home." ⁷⁷

Bennett College launched its Home Economics Department in 1937 in conjunction with its Eleventh Annual Home-Making Institute. As part of the launch, Bennett worked to integrate local high school home economics teachers into the HMI by hosting a pre-Institute conference for North Carolina High School Principals on April 24th under the heading, "The Meaning and Function of Home Economics Education in the Secondary School." Principals and Home Economics teachers were encouraged to attend by Dr. Flemmie Kittrell and Nathan Carter (N. C.) Newbold, Director of the Division for Negro Education, with the expressed goal of making "Home Economics and [the] Home-Making function more adequately in the state." Participants were invited to discuss "the meaning and function of Home Economics as it functions in education today." As a result of its success, the pre-conference was incorporated into the annual agenda for the HMI. Bennett received support from "several states and various organizations" for the continuance of the project because of its accessibility and relevance to all members of the community regardless of race. Bennett's leadership in this area earned the college the

⁷⁷ "Eighth Home-Making Institute Week," *Bennett Banner*, May 1934, 6.

responsibility to head the Center for the Better Homes Movement for the Negro Citizens of North Carolina.⁷⁸

The eleventh HMI was held in April 1937. Participants viewed a play directed by Miriam Gould, Assistant Professor of Home Economics, and entitled “Home-Making Education in the High Schools.” Daily presentations were made by Bess Rosa, Field Worker of Woman’s College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, N.C., who presented on “Modern Methods of Parental Education”; Dr. Joseph Houchins from the Department of Commerce, spoke on “The Social Significance of Home-Making”; and Helen Kendall, Professor of Art at Hampton Institute, who discussed “The Influence of Art on the personalities of Homes,” echoing goals of New Deal programs. Last, Dorothy Inborden Miller, Supervisor of Home Economics in the Public Schools of Washington DC, presented on “How Can Home Economics Education Contribute to the Economic and Social Security of Family Life?” The week concluded with a Fashion Review directed by Lydia Jettson, Instructor of Clothing from Bennett College.⁷⁹

Also presenting at the 1937 HMI was Dr. Flora Rose, the Director of Cornell University’s College of Home Economics. Dr. Rose addressed HMI participants on April 25th in Bennett’s Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel and informed attendees that Home

⁷⁸Flemmie Kittrell to HS principals, March 31, 1937, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. N.C. Newbold to Principals at High Schools and Union Schools, April 21, 1937, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

⁷⁹“The Eleventh Annual Home-Making Institute Week,” Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. WNM to JD, January 15, 1940, Box 398, Folder 4178, Series 1, FA058, General Education Board records (GEB), Rockefeller Archives Center. Jetton later became the Acting Dean of Women after Flemmie Kittrell accepted the Dean of Women position at Hampton University. The General Education Board funded a portion of Jetton’s graduate study at Columbia University to prepare her for this position. Jetton, a Bennett alumna, earned her master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin.

Economics education contributes to solving problems of family living in a way “that general education cannot contribute.” She continued, noting, “Home Economics developed out of the living conditions of present day life, because the home found itself unable to cope with the problems of ‘modern life’ without the assistance of education.” Dr. Rose also noted that Home Economics is “‘the one distinct contribution made by women to modern education.’ It supplements intellectual training, which teaches one to deal with people and things. It aims ... especially to consider education in relation to its uses.”⁸⁰

Mrs. Rosa’s address on April 27th was “Modern Methods in Parental Education.” Her presentation highlighted the development of the study of parenthood and child training, and recent recognition of it as a field of study. Significant developments in the field included the shift in views on child discipline, the development of modern machinery that had “complicated modern life,” and the effect of motion pictures and rapid transportation in bringing children into “direct contact with the different standards of one[‘s] community.” Last, she asserted that modern education was being influenced by psychology and mental hygiene.⁸¹

Held in February 1939, the thirteenth Annual HMI’s theme was “Child Development and Parent Education.” Over the course of the weeklong activities, attendees viewed a play, performed and produced by Bennett’s students, that emphasized the importance of nutrition; engaged in critical discussion about the development of the

⁸⁰“Dr. Rose in Address at Bennett College,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 26, 1937, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. “Mrs. Rosa is Speaker at Bennett Institute,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 28, 1937, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

⁸¹“Mrs. Rosa is Speaker at Bennett Institute,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 28, 1937, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

Nursery School Movement, issues related to rural families; and participated in demonstrations at Bennett's on-campus Nursery School. The trend of higher education institutions maintaining nursery schools emerged early in the decade. In 1931, there were 74 institutions that sponsored nursery schools, with 66 institutions reporting that a primary function of their nursery school was for the purpose of conducting "research in child development." Opportunities were also provided for Home Economics teachers and elementary and high school principals to confer on issues related to their professions. While many of the institutions participating were Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), HBCUs also participated in Nursery School-based research in programs created and maintained on their campuses. The HBCU child development movement ran "parallel to and independent from that of whites," with schools located at Hampton Institute (1929), Spelman College (1930), and Bennett College (1931). The goal of these schools on HBCUs campuses was an attempt, by each college, to "enrich rather than merely maintain children."⁸²

Home Making Institute themes during the 1940s included "The Home and Civilian" (1942), "The Negro Family in the Post War World" (1944), "The Returning Soldier and His Problems" (1945), "Opening Doorways to Economic Security" (1946), "What is Happening to the American Family" (1947), and "Today's Woman: Homemaker and Careerist" (1949). During the decade, there is a shift in the focus of the annual Home Making Institute themes. The themes reflect a shift from a focus on the home and women's role in it, to the war, women's changing role in the home and workforce, and the place of the Black family after the war. Each HMI in 1942, 1944, and

⁸²"Home-Making Institute is Held: Thirteenth Institute has 'Child Development and Parent Education' As Theme," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1939, 1. Emily Cahan, *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1963* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University), 23.

1945 focused on a different aspect of the war, and each HMI in 1946, 1947, and 1949 addressed an issue of domestic importance – both national and personal.⁸³

A program was not available for the 1942 HMI. However, *The Bennett Banner* reported that speakers for the program included Dr. Louise Stanley, Chief of the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D.C.; Dr. Victoria Carlson of Woman's College; Dr. Channing Tobias of the National Selective Service Board; Jessie Owens of the Physical Fitness of COD; Percival Leroy Prattis, Executive Director of the *Pittsburgh Courier*; and Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, President of Palmer Memorial Institute.⁸⁴

Two years later, the Institute turned its attention toward issues the Negro family would need to address after World War II. The Institute's focus was on three main areas of importance to the Black community: problems related to children, youth, and juveniles; women's employment; and health and nutrition. All three are recurring themes seen in the activity Bennett and its students undertook in its work with local communities during the 1930s and 1940s. Invited speakers for the eighteenth HMI, held in April 1944, included Nathaniel A. Burrell, Administrative Assistant, Juvenile Welfare Council in New York City; Judge William M. York, Juvenile Court, Greensboro; Willburn K. Wright and Juanita Morsley, U.S. Employment Service, Greensboro; D. G. Garland, American Federation of Labor representative; Jeanette Welch Brown, National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; Dr. Zenobia Gilpin, Richmond, VA; and Rita Miller, Dillard University. Alice Reid chaired a workshop on "The Responsibility of the Community in

⁸³"Echoes from Home-Making Institute," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 1. "Home Making Institute Held At Bennett," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1944, 1. "Home-Making Institute Brings Mrs. Roosevelt to Campus," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1945, 1. "Business Women Tell Of Unusual Careers," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 3. "What is Happening to the American Family? Twenty-First Annual Homemaking Institute," Box 11, Folder: Bennett College Presentations (1946-1948), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives. "Home-Making Institute '49 Features Career and Home," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1949, 1.

⁸⁴"Echoes from Home-Making Institute," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 1.

the Youth Problems of Today,” while Dr. Muriel Petioni chaired the “Wartime Problems in Food and Nutrition” workshop, and Dr. Frederic A. Jackson chaired the workshop “Women at Work Today and Trends Toward the Future.”⁸⁵

“The Returning Soldier and His Problems” was the theme of the nineteenth HMI, held in March 1945. It focused on the work necessary to welcome America’s veterans back to the country and their homes. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attended, gave the keynote address, and afterwards greeted each veteran “personally with a hearty handshake and a motherly word of encouragement.” Attendees learned about the government’s plans for veterans’ children from Dr. Katherine Lenroot, Chief, Children’s Bureau, United States Department of Labor; and viewed “Home for Good,” a play written for the Home Making Institute and performed by Bennett students in the Collins Grove Community. Participants also had an opportunity to hear from recently returned war correspondent, Art Carter, who had spent time and recently returned from the Italian Theatre of War Operations with the 92nd Negro infantry unit. Carter provided firsthand accounts of American soldiers’ experiences fighting for freedom and democracy on the front line. The closing session, led by Colonel Campbell Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Director of Selective Service, provided information on the government’s plans to meet the needs of returning veterans.⁸⁶

“Opening Doorways to Economic Security” was the theme of Bennett’s twentieth Home Making Institute, held in March 1946, where the focus was on career opportunities

⁸⁵“Bennett To Sponsor Homemaking Institute” – April 17th – 22nd,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1944, 4. “Home Making Institute Held At Bennett,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1944, 1. “Inquiring Reporter,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1944, 3. “Homemaking Institute To Open Tonight,” Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁸⁶“Home-Making Institute Brings Mrs. Roosevelt to Campus,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1945, 1. “Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt Campus Institute Speaker – Delivers Speech During Home-Making Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1945, 1.

available to women in the business world. Several businesswomen presented students with information on available business opportunities and dispensed advice on how best to prepare themselves “to meet the demands, develop integrity, character and personality.”⁸⁷ When asked about the significance and value of the 1946 HMI to students, Belles expressed appreciation for the focus on business, particularly the success that women experienced in the business field as an alternative to the traditional roles Black women were expected to fill. Students indicated that the speakers demonstrated that “women are as capable of playing an important part in business as men. Such things as personality, integrity, simplicity and determination are qualities that lead to success in any endeavor,” and that it gave them “a greater admiration for those who have striven and succeeded, and ... courage to persevere in business for ourselves.” Last, it gave students “greater respect and admiration for people in non-professional fields,” as well as represented a “great opportunity for college graduates who do not wish to go into a profession.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷“Business Women Tell Of Unusual Careers,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 3. “Business Women Hailed at Bennett: Institute Speakers Stress Preparation,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 1. “Opening Doorways to Economic Security Is Theme of 20th Home-Making Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1946, 6. Jessie Matthews Vann assumed this role after her husband, Robert Vann’s, death in 1940. Mrs. George W. Brown assumed this role after her husband’s death. Presenters included Sara Spencer Washington, president and founder of the Apex Company, Atlantic City, N.J.; Annie Vann Reid, owner of a floral business in Darlington, S.C.; Jessie Matthews Vann, President-Treasurer of *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Mrs. George W. Brown, operator of a trucking business in Scranton, Pa.; and Gertrude Anderson, a candy manufacturer from Birmingham, Ala. Other speakers during the week included Charles Clinton (C.C.). Spaulding, president of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Durham, N.C.; George Streater, the *New York Times*’ first Negro reporter; Bertha Diggs, Secretary of Labor of the State of New York; and John R. Pinkett, real estate broker from Washington D.C. Presenters also included men in addition to the businesswomen. Among them were Jesse B. (J.B.) Blayton, certified public accountant, Atlanta, Ga.; J.S. Stewart, secretary-manager, Mutual Building and Loan Association, Durham, N.C.; H.C. Woodland, Board Chairman, Safe Bus Co., Winston Salem, N.C.; George Weaver, CIO representative, Washington D.C.; D.G. Garland, High Point, organizer of American Federation of Labor (AFL); A.E. Brown, organizer for the North Carolina Federation of Labor; J.E. Stamps, branch manager, Social Security Office, Chicago, Ill.

⁸⁸“Inquiring Reporter: Of What Value was the Home-Making Institute To You?,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 2.

Dr. Frank Porter Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, gave the closing address. Speaking on the topic, “Scientific Inventions for Production, Freedom and Peace,” he noted that in the post-WWII world,

If atomic energy is to bring world security and guarantee to all peoples freedoms and peace, America must take the lead in amending the United Nations Charter so that atomic power can be put under control and not be the secret of any nation.⁸⁹

He continued, discussing great “revolutions” that have come about because of the invention of small mechanisms such as the compass, which, although it helped man explore and advance, also brought forward contradictions in social advancement. He said,

Although this small object made possible the discovery of America and opened a gateway of communication and trade between nations, it also brought the evils of colonialism, imperialism and human slavery. The power engine, ... gave rise to the industrial revolution with its labor movement and a fuller recognition of women. Also with it came the four great hopes of economic security, freedom, democracy and peace. America is at the crossroads of human destiny ... may she not fail mankind in this tragic hour ... may she rise to the responsibilities and opportunities of her greatness and give fresh hope to the hungry peoples of the earth.⁹⁰

By 1947, the college turned its attention inward to assess the status of the family. Under the theme, “What is Happening to the American Family?,” the 21st Home Making Institute addressed the problems of family life in post-WWII America. Citing “*The Eagle’s Brood*,” the 1947 HMI committee chose to address issues affecting American families. Inherent in this discussion was the shift in traditional family roles because of men’s prolonged absence from the home due to war; the impact on the family of women working and leaving their children in the care of others; and the impact of juvenile delinquency “sweeping our State and Nation.” Conveners of the HMI understood the

⁸⁹“Graham concludes Twentieth Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, 1.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 1.

ongoing relationship between the college and its surrounding community and that individually each person could, and should, assist in alleviating these problems.⁹¹

To this end, the committee assembled several experts to participate in the 21st HMI, including Nannie Helen Burroughs, Secretary, Women's Convention National Baptist Convention, Washington D.C.; Dr. Augusta Fox Bronner, Psychologist, Boston, Mass., who spoke about "Recent Trends in American Family Life" and "Democracy in the Family"; Dr. Dudley P. Miller, who spoke about "Alcoholism, Its Effects on the Family"; Gladys Groves, Director Marriage and Family Council, Inc., Chapel Hill, N.C., who presented "Education of Youth for Marriage"; B.L. Smith, Superintendent of Greensboro Public Schools, who spoke on "Youth Problems"; and Dr. Allan Knight Chalmers, Pastor Broadway Tabernacle, New York City, who presented "A Job for the Unafraid." The HMI also included a panel discussion entitled, "Problems of Interpersonal Relations," with Grace T. Hamilton, of Atlanta, Ga. presiding over the discussion. Participants included Dr. Gladys Groves, Dr. Augusta Fox Bonner, Dr. Donald Klaiss, Thelma Stevens, and Frances Fuller. There was also a roundtable discussion on "Family Relations," which included Grace T. Hamilton, Thelma Stevens, and Frances Fuller as participants.⁹²

Bennett's 1949 HMI opened on April 3rd under the theme, "Today's Woman: Homemaker and Careerist." The objectives of the Institute included:

To explore a career with homemaking on the woman, the home and society. To achieve an understanding of the economic and social forces that cause woman to seek careers outside the home. To provide opportunities for student participation in the discussion of this important issue. To point up the

⁹¹"What is Happening to the American Family? Twenty-First Annual Homemaking Institute," Box 11, Folder: Bennett College Presentations (1946-1948), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁹²"What is Happening to the American Family? Twenty-First Annual Homemaking Institute," Box 11, Folder: Bennett College Presentations (1946-1948), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

responsibility of the individual, the government, and industry in keeping the price of consumer goods within the range of people whose income is low. To explore, ... the job opportunities that are open to women. To implement our adult education activities in the community. To afford an opportunity for Inter-division cooperation. To point up the responsibility of the homemaker in the field of national security and world peace.⁹³

Ruth Bryan Rohde, former Congresswoman and Ambassador to Denmark, opened the Institute. Recognizing the shift in women's career opportunities, and the shift in the roles of women in America during and after the war, the committee addressed the question of what was more important, being a homemaker or a career woman. The HMI committee believed this question was of prime importance to young Black college women because recent trends revealed that women were choosing to combine careers along with responsibilities of the home, a notion that was not wholly foreign to Black women. The HMI committee wanted students and attendees to consider the impact that women's pursuit of professional and business careers would have on families. To address the issue directly, the HMI presented women who successfully navigated this path to Bennett students and the community. Presenters were able to offer "concrete ways" problems, if any, could be addressed.⁹⁴ Speakers for the institute included Adelaide C. Hill, Professor of Sociology at Smith College; Dr. Ruth G. Sloan, Chief of the Near East and African Branch of Public Affairs Overseas Program in Washington, D.C.; Clarence Pickett, Executive Secretary of American Friends Service Committee of Philadelphia; Dr. Marynia F. Farnham of New York; and Bess Furman, Washington Correspondent for the *New York Times* in Washington, D.C.⁹⁵

Bennett continued with its annual HMI during the 1950s with a distinct change in the Institute's focus. Following the war, the HMI focused attention on the availability of

⁹³"Home-Making Institute '49 Features Career and Home," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1949, 1.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 1.

services and job opportunities for Black veterans and the new opportunities available to women in the business field. During the 1950s, attention was turned to “Achieving Peace Through Creative Expression” (1953); “Achieving Self-Fulfillment Through Understanding” (1957); and “Achieving Happiness Through Creative Experience” (1958).⁹⁶

During the 1950s, the focus of Bennett’s Home Making Institute shifted from traditional beliefs about a woman’s role in the home, what women *should* be and do, toward what women *could* be and do. The college’s twenty-seventh HMI was held in March 1953 with the theme, “Achieving Peace Through Creative Experiences.” *Invisible Man* author, Ralph Ellison, gave the opening address, directly addressing the theme; Ellison shared with attendees that the peace he knew came from the perspective of “a person who [has] dedicated himself to fiction or art,” and he asserted that “each generation must rediscover the world for itself.” Allen Raymond, Foreign Correspondent and writer for *Reporter Magazine*, also addressed HMI attendees. Raymond shared that “peace will have to come as an individual matter”; he continued, “There will be no peace, so long as tyranny and slavery exists.” He further indicated that individual peace could come “from a sense of accomplishment of something worth doing.” Bennett alumna and actress, Maidie Ruth Gamble (Norman), star of “The Well,” addressed HMI participants on the role of films in achieving peace. The remaining speakers included G. James Fleming, Executive Director of the *New York Amsterdam News*; and Mary Esther McWhirter, Director of Peace Education for Children, and editor of the American Friends Service Committee of Philadelphia’s paper, *News Letter*. Students editorialized the major ideas resulting from the week’s activities, indicating,⁹⁷

⁹⁶“Peace to be Theme of Homemaking Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1953, 1. “Thirty-First Home-Making Institute,” *Bennett Banner*, April 1957, 1. “Creativity Stressed at Homemaking Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1958, 4.

⁹⁷“27th Annual Homemaking Institute Held at Bennett,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1953, 1.

“We as human beings are a gregarious group and we need to work together....” “If the countries of the world would assemble and discuss the many talents they have to offer, instead of discussing war strategy....” “Does anyone ever stop to think of the creative ability within the people of these lands?...” “In fact all of the countries have something to offer creative experiences.... Maybe in the world of tomorrow people will lay aside their firearms and bloodshed will cease. If not in our generation, probably in future generations, people will come together through the medium of creativity and gain a true peace.”⁹⁸

Held in March 1955, Bennett’s twenty-ninth HMI was opened with an address from Howard University philosophy professor, Dr. William Augustus Banner, at the weekly Sunday Vespers service in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel. The timely topic for the HMI was “Education for Social Change.” It hints at the growing discontent of America’s Black citizens, and their impending protest activities, which began in the mid-1950s. This topic was not new or novel for Bennett, which had been preparing its students to take a position on and participate in actions for social change related to current social and political issues for the past two decades. Topics addressed during the week included “Factors Effecting Social Change Upon the Modern Family,” presented by Robert G. Crosswhite, Guilford County Domestic Relations Court; William Malone, Guilford County Health Department; Lawrence Thompson, Guilford County Welfare Department; and Dr. John R. Peck, Director of Special Education in Greensboro. As was the tradition, the 1955 HMI included a movie viewing and a fashion show that showcased student work as well as demonstrated money-saving techniques “for one’s wardrobe.” In addition, there were demonstrations to assist attendees with strategies intended to economize “meal planning and preparation.” There was also discussion on income tax preparation and family banking. On the final day, the last presentation centered on “The Family’s Economy” and “The Family and its Community.” Dr. Mozell C. Hill, Sociology

⁹⁸Ellison was winner of the 1952 National Book Award for best fiction. Motion picture star, Maidie Ruth Gamble (Norman), is a 1934 Bennett College graduate who received her master’s from Columbia University in 1937, and star of “The Well.” “27th Annual Homemaking Institute Held at Bennett,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1953, 1.

Department Chair at Atlanta University, gave the closing speech in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel.⁹⁹

Over two days in February 1957, Bennett hosted its Mid-Winter Leadership conference under the theme “Academic Leadership: A Means To Better Job Opportunities.” Presentations for the conference covered several areas through which academic leadership experience could offer a fulfilling career path. Among the topics covered in panel presentations were “Job Opportunities in the Humanities,” where Bennett’s Student Senate President Paula Edmunds presided. Bennett’s President, Dr. Willa B. Player, along with Wilhelmina Gilbert, William Gibson, James McMillan, and Dr. Hobart Jarrett participated in a session devoted to discussion of job opportunities in Higher Education, Government, Public Relations, and Commercial Art for Women. Anna B. Camp, Lillian Snipes, Dr. J. Henry Sayles, William Le Flore, Van S. Allen, and Mr. Roy Lee took part in the panel on “Job Opportunities in the Natural Sciences,” covering Dietetics, Cosmetology, Research, Laboratory Technology, and Public Health. Last, the conference covered “Job Opportunities in the Social Sciences,” where Mayme Ellerbe presided over a panel that included Dr. Rose Karfiol, J. W. Martin, Edward Martin, Dr. James L. Stuart, and Dr. Chauncey Winston. The discussion covered opportunities in finance, insurance, and law.¹⁰⁰

Little information is available on the 31st HMI held in March 1957. The college planned roundtable discussions, informal sessions, movies, and a discussion on community colleges. In her opening statement, President Player declared that this HMI “will lift up for our consideration one of the most commanding challenges in education today.” Under the theme, “Achieving Self-Fulfillment Through Understanding,” there

⁹⁹“Twenty-Ninth Homemaking Institute Convenes,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1955, 1. William August Banner, Philosophy Professor at Howard University, is a 1938 graduate of Yale Divinity School and former Bennett College, where he taught for five years.

¹⁰⁰“Homemaking Institute Set,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1957, 1.

were panel discussions on “Achieving Satisfaction,” “Understanding Myself,” and “Relating Myself to Others,” in addition to exhibits and lectures. The HMI concluded with a speech by Morehouse College President, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays.¹⁰¹

The last HMI in the 1950s for which there is documentation was held in March 1958, with “Achieving Happiness Through Creative Experience” as the theme. Radio and television artist, Mary Margaret McBride, opened the Institute with an address on “The Pursuit of Happiness through Creativity,” during which she provided students with a “brief sketch” of her life to show how she used creativity, informing students that “creativity is not reserved for artists and geniuses alone,” but rather is available to any intelligent person, and that one must begin the process with a definite goal. Guests for the Institute, in addition to McBride, included Robert Vandivier of the National Training Laboratory, National Education Association; Franklin H. McNutt, Dean of the Graduate School, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; and William J. Trent, Jr., Executive Director of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Students had the opportunity to “experiment with ‘creativity’ in several areas including art, crafts, cooking, problem solving, dance, dress design, drama, music, poetry, and writing.” The results of their experimentation were displayed in the Student Union. Additional participants included Edith Baxter and Marietta Mason, from Duke Power Company; C. H. Phillips, Art Supervisor, Greensboro; Doris Portis, Necchi-Elna Sewing Machines; and Lou Riley, Ellis Stone and Company. Robert Watson, Woman’s College, and Gene Wilson, Federal Bake Shops, Inc. led the creative experience. Robert Vandivier spoke on “Creative Thinking: Its Problems and Processes.” He explained that in the creative process, students need to be willing to make mistakes, and provided specific instances for students “where music, dance, and love of people were expressions of creativity.” A discussion and

¹⁰¹“Dr. Mays To Speak at First Session,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1957, 1. “Thirty-First Annual Home-Making Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1957, 1.

demonstration followed, led by Vandivier and Dr. McNutt on “Techniques for Creative Thinking.” Dr. Trent demonstrated “brainstorming” for students as a tool for use to find creative solutions. The thirty-second HMI concluded with an address by Morehouse College president, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays.¹⁰²

By 1960, the theme had become a bold declaration for action rather than a call for the students and Greensboro community to understand and address issues that affected Greensboro and North Carolina’s Black population. The 1960 theme boldly declared, “Register and Vote: A Necessity for Good Citizenship!”¹⁰³

Conclusion

Traditionally, the academic and student life curricula at Bennett College were designed to promote social justice.¹⁰⁴

By engaging its students in co-curricular activities that required them to plan, coordinate, and execute events, as well as participating in the annual HMIs, Bennett students were exposed to many real-world problems and events. Their physical presence and contributions to discussions informed the world that Black women’s roles were in many different places. They could be wives and mothers, or professionals, leaders in industry, educators, or any combination of these. Their place was in the home – if they so chose; in the classroom – primary, secondary and college; in offices, lobbying elected officials, etc. – in short, wherever Black women chose to be. Their voices were lifted to

¹⁰² “Creativity Stressed at Homemaking Institute,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1958, 4.

¹⁰³ “The Thirty-Fourth Annual Home-Making Institute, Bennett College; Theme: Register and Vote! A Necessity for Good Citizenship,” April 3-10, 1960, A Statement of Introduction, 2, Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹⁰⁴ Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” ix.

express concern about social issues that affected them because of their gender, and their location within their local community, state, the country, and the world.

Throughout its history, Bennett College continually emphasized “‘service’ ... to one’s people.” At Bennett, preparation of students was for service and came in the form of student participation in campus activities. Player continued her predecessor’s practice of including students on all campus committees, making Bennett one of the first colleges in the country to do this.¹⁰⁵ In the early years of the college, there were fewer than ten activities; by the late 1950s, Bennett College offered its students more than twenty co-curricular organizations, in addition to academic exchanges with other women’s colleges, including Mount Holyoke, Sarah Lawrence, Skidmore College, Ohio Wesleyan, and Warren Willamette College.¹⁰⁶ This concrete, hands-on experience was supported and nurtured by the academic curriculum, thus meeting the students’ need for theoretical and applied experience.¹⁰⁷

Bennett College prided itself on the product of its education, the “Bennett Belle.” Bennett’s “Belle” was likely a derivation of the idea of the “Southern Belle.” Southerners used this term in the nineteenth century to describe wealthy White women in the South prior to the Civil War. They were upper middle class women, married to plantation owners whose wealth was derived from the slave trade. For Bennett College to employ this description of Southern womanhood to describe its students and alumnae was a bold step in the process of re-envisioning Black womanhood from the Black woman’s perspective. Their version of Black womanhood was reimagined without its connection to the negative images and harsh reality of slavery, as outlined in Chapter I of this dissertation. It did not carry the all-too-common negative connotations often associated

¹⁰⁵Brown, *The Long Walk*, 65-66.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 110. Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” 276-286.

¹⁰⁷Lockwood, “Bennett College for Women,” ix, 12.

with and ascribed to Black womanhood – immoral, undignified, lazy, and promiscuous.¹⁰⁸

Boldly, the College stated that their students and alumnae were to be seen as American ladies and American citizens worthy of the respect and dignity that too often eluded them. The Bennett Belle represented herself as an “elegant” and orderly woman, and her existence garnered the institution a reputation as a “finishing school” and “elitist.” Former presidents of the college eschewed these characterizations because they represented an outsider’s limited understanding – an “appearance” or “form” – of the college’s students and alumnae. The public missed entirely the content and substance, essentially the core and purpose, of the education at Bennett College. Underlying their students’ presentation was a call to society to recognize that these college women were as respectable as Greensboro’s, and indeed America’s, White women citizens.¹⁰⁹

Beyond this appearance of fine womanhood lay the true purpose of Bennett College’s educational mission – a mission forged when the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society (MWHMS) became interested in starting a college specifically for Black women and chose to collaborate with Bennett College to do so. In founding Bennett College for Women, the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church sought to create a school that “would respond to the need for the education of Black women.” These Methodist women saw provision of education as a “responsibility of the church.” The education provided would meet the essential needs of Black women who lived under segregation and oppression in the United States, particularly in the South.¹¹⁰ David Dallas Jones, Bennett College for Women’s first president, understood the challenges

¹⁰⁸Brown, *The Long Walk*, 127, 189.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 127, 189.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 21, 22 and 103. This spelling is consistent with the spelling contained in the source document. The *Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Methodist Woman’s Home Mission Society* uses “Woman’s” instead of “Women’s.” Linda Beatrice Brown’s book, *The Long Walk*, uses “Women’s.”

facing Black women because of their race and gender. His mission as its first president was to develop an institution that would

provide education that equipped the black student both to live within the limitations imposed by virtue of her color, ... [and] enable her to transcend the racial boundaries and to reach beyond these limitations in an endeavor to obtain the satisfaction and privileges of the wider life which the color line seeks to deny; ... [this education] will prepare her to fulfill the role which society has assigned her by virtue of her sex.¹¹¹

The curriculum and co-curricular changes sought to address the issues Jones detailed in his personal statement above. Students were aware of the social circumstances in which they lived, but by no means were they educated to believe that their current circumstance was fixed. Students were given opportunities to develop skills that helped them change these circumstances, to more fully enjoy their lives as American citizens, and to balance the responsibilities typically ascribed and assigned to women. Jones's mission was furthered by Player's vision when she was elevated to the College's presidency. Her vision was born from having spent 25 years working at Bennett under the leadership of Jones, and no doubt shaped by the fact that she shared the same gender and race as those entering the college to be educated and prepared to lead a purposeful and participatory life.¹¹² Player envisioned that the college would

help each student to come to a full sense of her identity as a person and create a climate in which each may gain release from the prison of self; develop new criteria for the choice of careers; reexamine the moral, social and cultural aspect of campus life; provide competence, responsible participation and liberty for every student. Ours ... will be the task of sending out graduates equipped in every respect to help release from bondage a region enslaved with the chains of hate and segregation, and to lead forth a people into the full understanding and realization of their rights,

¹¹¹Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 152-153.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 152-153.

privileges and responsibilities as citizens of America's envisioned democracy.¹¹³

The democratic atmosphere Jones and Player cultivated at Bennett College represented an effort to prepare its students to assume full citizenship rights and leadership roles in their communities. From Player's perspective, looming racial issues in America dictated Bennett's mission. She felt strongly that the college must help its students develop skills to deal with America's dilemma about which Gunnar Myrdal wrote. Player's educational philosophy has been summed up in a few words: "It is not a viable education which does not consider the reality of racial discrimination in this country."¹¹⁴

¹¹³"The Inauguration: New Vistas," *Bennett College Bulletin*, 24, no. 4, (November 1956): 6.

¹¹⁴Brown, *The Long Walk*, 58-59. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

Chapter V

STUDENT PROTEST AND ACTIVISM AT
BENNETT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, 1930-1960

Introduction

“Action without study is folly, but study without action is futile.”¹

Willa B. Player, 1963
Faculty Fall Conference

Willa Beatrice Player made the above statement at the Faculty Fall conference in 1963, quoting the slogan of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). The comment reminds the reader of Player’s inaugural address in October 1956. In that address, she stated, “At this point, there can be no standing still, no compromise and no equivocation.”² Having worked quietly in the background for years with Bennett College students addressing issues and building strategic partnerships, Player, like most Black citizens, had become impatient and restless with the state of race relations in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the United States. Her statement calls to the educated to utilize their education and skills to advocate and agitate for changes in the social order of the South.

This chapter explores Bennett’s students’ engagement in protest and activism over three decades in the early twentieth century, a period that coincides with the Long Black Student Movement (LBSM). Their work mirrors the characteristics embodied in the

¹Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College* (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women’s Leadership Institute, 1998), 158.

²“The Inauguration: New Vistas,” *Bennett College Bulletin* 24, no. 4, (November 1956): 6.

actions of earlier student protestors. Bennett's students directed their activism and protest toward off-campus issues that affected their lives as American citizens. This chapter draws connections between student lives and the local, national, and international events that affected them. The chapter primarily uses the student newspaper begun in 1930, *The Bennett Banner*, to chronologically trace and identify the type of protest and activism students engaged in between 1930 and 1960; the issues around which they organized; and the strategic partnerships developed between the college and its students with government agencies, and local and national organizations. It reveals the institutional and community supports that undergirded Bennett students' ability to participate in protest activity during this period; and last, how their engagement in protest and activism challenged the gender roles, norms, and expectation for women, and what their engagement in these activities reveals about their college experience.³

Research Context and Significance, 1930-1960

There is a genuine restlessness and dissatisfaction on the part of Colored people than I have before known.... It seems to me something ought to be done pretty definitely to change the attitudes of these millions of black people ... this attitude ... is due very largely to recent lynchings and burnings of colored people.⁴

Robert R. Moton, President of Tuskegee Institute, penned the above words in a June 1918 letter to President Woodrow Wilson, one year before a siege of race riots occurred across America. Moton's words expressed the palpable discontent of many Black Americans with the state of race relations in the United States. The conditions and events that compelled him to write this letter persisted throughout the 1920s and were

³"Student Paper Enters Upon Second Year," *Bulletin of Bennett College for Women* 7, no. 2 (October 1931): 4. *Bennett College Bulletin, Catalogue Number 1936-1937* 11, no. 2. (1936): 82.

⁴ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 261.

compounded by several world events and issues that shaped the period under study here. As the twentieth century began, the United States was still grappling with the after-effects of Reconstruction and the country's problem with the "color line." The most critical issue for Black Americans was the poor state of race relations that continued to plague the country, as evidenced in the *Scottsboro Case* and the difficulty getting national anti-lynching legislation passed by Washington, D.C. lawmakers. It was during the nearly 55-year period between 1877 and 1930 that America's Black citizens began to feel the full effects of Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, segregation, lynching, and race riots on their lives. These acts and actions defined and shaped the tone and tenor of race relations in the United States and placed oppressive limitations on the lives Black Americans could live in the South.⁵

Student protest and activism at Bennett College began in Depression Era America, a time when Americans desperately needed and sought financial and economic relief. The federal government provided that relief to its citizens, within the limits of existing racial norms and boundaries. These boundaries were often imposed by government officials, on both the national and local levels, who were responsible for implementation and administration of New Deal programs focused on economic recovery and economic security. Most New Deal benefits excluded agricultural and domestic workers, fields in which America's Black citizens represented an overwhelming majority. However, there were some New Deal programs that did benefit Black Americans, including the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Project Number One, which employed artists, writers, actors, and directors in arts, drama, media, and literacy projects; and the National

⁵"Borah Would Cut Heart from Anti-Lynching Bill," *The Carolina Times*, January 1, 1938, 6.

Youth Administration (NYA), which provided work and education support for American youth and college students.⁶

Knowing and understanding the goals of these programs is integral to understanding the types of activism in which Bennett's students engaged, as many of their actions within the Greensboro community mirror federal programs that assisted White citizens during this time but failed to provide sufficient, if any, relief for Black citizens in North Carolina. While its direct assistance to Black Americans was minimal, Roosevelt's New Deal created an "atmosphere that made possible challenges to the racial and ethnic status quo" of the 1950s and 1960s as Southern elected officials, during the Depression, "mold[ed] the New Deal welfare state into an entitlement program for white Americans." This revealed the disparity between White and Black citizens and was the basis of Black citizens' growing discontent.⁷

The Great Depression further contributed to a precipitous decline in the state of race relations, as America's Black citizens were largely excluded from the benefits of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal recovery programs.⁸ Despite this general exclusion, opportunities were created in the president's Cabinet and in New Deal program offices for key Black figures. These leaders, referred to informally as Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet," advised the president on matters related to the condition

⁶Foner, "Give me Liberty!: An American History" (New York, W. W. Norton, 2014), 826, 835-840. Larkin, *The Negro Population of North Carolina: Social and Economic* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944), 40. "The Federal Budget and the Student," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1940, 2.

⁷Foner, "Give me Liberty!," 826, 835-840. Larkin, *The Negro Population in North Carolina*, 40. "The Federal Budget and the Student," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1940, 2.

⁸Harvard A. Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue Volume I: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970). Bernard Sternsher, *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969). Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Pub. Corp.).

and state of the lives of America's Black citizens. Unlike earlier periods, Black Americans actively and vociferously protested against their continued oppression. Combined with their attainment of higher education, and emboldened by their contribution to the wars fought by America to protect American-style democracy and freedom abroad, returning Black veterans demanded their rights and became unwilling to have second-class citizenship thrust upon them.⁹

As a whole, America's Black citizens made significant strides toward securing full citizenship rights through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as it actively worked to dismantle legal segregation, through the country's court system, in the area of graduate and higher education. The NAACP worked steadily toward the lofty goal of abolishing segregation in public education and all public accommodations. Their early court victories in the 1930s and 1940s, along with Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941, gave hope to Black Americans that they would soon be able to exercise full citizenship rights. Successes of the early court cases showed a steady progression when the NAACP's legal strategy later bore fruit with the Supreme Court's rendering of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. This decision inspired many acts of public protest, known and unknown, in the ongoing struggle for civil rights, including the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, the 1957

⁹The Black Cabinet included: James A. Atkins, Mary McLeod Bethune, Edgar G. Brown, Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Sterling Brown, Dr. Ambrose Caliver, Charles Craft, Constance E.H. Daniels, James P. Davis, Charles S. Duke, Joseph H.B. Evans, Dutton Ferguson, Harper Fortune, Charles E. Hall, William H. Hastie, T. Arnold Hill, Dr. Frank Horne, Joseph R. Houchins, William J. Houston, Henry A. Hunt, Dewey R. Jones, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Edward H. Lawson, Ralph E. Mizelle, Lawrence A. Oxley, J. Parker Prescott, Alfred Edgar Smith, William J. Trent, William J. Thompkins, Robert C. Weaver, Arthur Weiseger, and John W. Whitten. The list is not exhaustive. Executive Order 8802 prohibited racial discrimination in the national defense industry. <http://www.inmotionaame.org/gallery/detail.cfm;jsessionid=f8301988191448723586865?migration=9&topic=8&id=487435&bhcp=1>.

desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the 1960 student-led sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina.¹⁰

Black Americans' fight for their rights was furthered by the 1935 formation of the National Negro Congress (NNC). The NNC envisioned building a grassroots Negro movement to press for policy changes that would improve the lives of America's Black citizens. NNC's first major undertaking was to hold hearings at Howard University in May 1935 under the theme, "The Position of the Negro in the Present Economic Condition." This meeting allowed government officials to hear grievances from America's Black citizens about their concerns, but specifically about the plight of Black workers during the Great Depression. Shortly after the hearings, political scientist Ralph Bunche organized a group of leaders to discuss a course of action that would include creation of proposed solutions to problems faced by the Black community. With more than 800 people present, representing 585 organizations, NNC's February 1936 meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois, where representatives developed its governing structure and set an ambitious agenda for the new civil rights organization. Although short-lived, NNC brought together numerous Black intellectuals and labor leaders, including Ralph Bunche, A. Phillip Randolph, and Charles Hamilton Houston, in an effort to advance an agenda that sought Black liberation. These alliances were essential, as these were the early years of a nascent civil rights movement.¹¹

¹⁰ NAACP cases included *Murray v. Maryland* (1936), desegregation of the University of Maryland law school; *Gaines v. Canada* (1938), desegregation of the University of Missouri; *Smith v. Allwright* (1940), abolished the White primary; *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946), desegregation of interstate travel; *Shelly V. Kraemer* (1948), overruled the enforcement of racial covenants in real estate transactions; and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), which overturned the ability for state schools to enforce state laws that resulted in the differential treatment of students based on race and overturned the "Separate but Equal" doctrine of racial segregation.

¹¹ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of The American People* (Boston, Mass.: McGraw Hill, 2000), 699-700, 740, 757, 761-790. Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1981), 71-170. "Howard University Students Picket National Crime Conference in D.C.," International News Press, Inc. December 1934, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, included in *One Way*

College students were concerned about major social and political issues including war, poverty, the economy, and politics. These concerns, and the actions taken, make this thirty-year period significant for student protest and activism in the United States. Student activism during the 1930s diverged sharply from the previous decade and the two that followed. American students had begun creating national student organizations in the 1920s; however, student activity in the 1930s eventually far outpaced activity in the 1920s. The National Student Federation (NSF), created in 1926, provided students a national political network that gave them the opportunity to participate in national politics. Additional national student organizations were formed during the 1930s, and capitalized on the networks established by NSF. These newer organizations focused on promoting political awareness and involvement as a solution to institutional and social problems as well as “outlining methods for achieving results.”¹²

Some historians have argued that, during the 1940s and 1950s, there was little, if any, identifiable engagement in protest and activism among the nation’s college student population. One of the main reasons is that by the 1940s national student organizations formed during the 1920s and 1930s were disbanded and replaced by the United States National Student Association (USNSA). Its formation was intended “to strengthen student government, enhance civil liberties on American campuses, and expand access to higher education.” The NSA encouraged its member institutions and students to “avoid

Ticket: Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North, exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, April 3-September 7, 2015. Gladys Johnetta Richards, *The Southern Youth Negro Congress: A History* (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1987), accessed June 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/304894867/fulltextPDF/DBDDA684032F4F43PQ/2?accountid=14258>. The National Negro Congress filled the void created by the loss of organizations that, like the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, fought segregation using different tactics than NAACP’s main strategy in the court system. Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corporation), 353-359.

¹²Mark Edelman Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*, (New York: Routledge), 92-93.

taking on political causes,” a clear divergence from student protest activity of the 1930s, when students collaborated with unions, demonstrated against poverty, and provided commentary on numerous political issues, in addition to associating with organizations and individuals known to be communists or socialists. The emphasis on disengaging from “political causes” explains the conclusion reached by several higher education professional associations during the 1950s. The professional association members asserted that USNSA “is not now, nor does it appear to be in danger of becoming communist or left-dominated.” This opinion is typical of the Cold War Era avoidance of association with individuals and organizations within the U.S. known to be communist or socialist.¹³

The dearth of activity in the 1940s and 1950s is most often directly attributed to the United States’ entrance into World War II, its battle against Communism, and the effects of McCarthyism. This combination of physical and ideological battles encouraged Americans to distance themselves and their organizations from any organization or person associated with communism. It also encouraged the destruction of files related to any communist-affiliated organization or activity. Student protest activity during the 1930s had a strong link to labor movements, as evidenced by the creation of the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC) by NNC in 1937. NNC advocated Black admittance into labor unions, while SNYC encouraged the use of more aggressive tactics than the slow-moving legal strategy employed by the NAACP to secure citizenship rights. Yet SNYC espoused aims similar to those of the NAACP. SNYC sponsored annual youth

¹³Kenneth Kenniston, “The Sources of Student Dissent,” in *Black Power and Student Rebellion*, eds. James McEvoy and Abraham Miller (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1969), 309. “Student Organization Cited as Representative,” *Bennett Banner*, May 1958, 4. Representatives of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and National Association of Women Deans and Counselors (NAWDC) passed a joint statement on the USNSA; it included an evaluation of USNSA indicating that it was “a representative, democratic, national student organization.”

conferences, pursued an end to sharecropping, and supported the creation of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation.¹⁴

Despite the tenor of the times, members of national student organizations were often affiliated with communist and socialist leaning groups, if not communists or socialists themselves. The lack of primary and secondary source documentation of protest activity offers a valid explanation of why this period is perceived as less active; and a reason why students' protest and activism appear to be less visible during these years. It also provides a plausible reason why there are few existing detailed records available for researchers related to student protest and activism in Bennett College's archives.¹⁵

Another factor obscuring the struggle for civil rights and student protest and activism during this period is the pressure placed on Black Americans to refrain from publicly fighting to outlaw and dismantle segregation in the United States. Generally speaking, the United States wanted all of its citizens, specifically Black Americans, to conform to prescribed behavior norms and to support the idea of America as a great democracy, despite the fact that neither Roosevelt's Four Freedoms nor the guarantees of the U. S. Constitution were applied equally to Black citizens residing within the States, or fighting abroad for American democracy and freedom. Their continued protest and activism, it was argued, would tarnish America's reputation on the world stage, where the U.S. wanted to project an image of a truly democratic society.¹⁶

¹⁴Johnetta Gladys Richards, "The Southern Negro Youth Congress: A History," 20.

¹⁵Harvard A. Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue Volume I: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970). Bernard Sternsher, *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969). Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁶Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), 926.

Student Protest and Activism at Bennett College, 1930-1960

Front page headlines in *The Greensboro Daily News* on Wednesday, December 8, 1937 read, “Carolina Theatre Owners Hold Jubilee Convention,” and “Resolution Adopted by Theater Owners: Objects to Negroes’ Purported Appearance Out of Character in Movies.” The proceedings of the Theater Owners of North and South Carolina, Incorporated’s 25th anniversary was capped by the adoption of the following twenty-three word resolution: “Resolved: That the convention goes on record in disapproving the appearance of negroes in scenes *with white people on an equal social basis*.” The resolution declared with unobscured clarity that Southern theater owners objected to the appearance of Blacks and Whites in movies as equals. Presumably depicting Blacks and Whites onscreen on an equal social basis would convey the incorrect message to Southern Black Americans. From the owners’ perspective, it was only acceptable to envision and depict Blacks on film in a subservient state, in roles indelibly linked to their past servitude. Or perhaps portrayal “on an equal basis” was too much of a reminder, to Southern Whites, that Blacks were indeed American citizens entitled to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and its Amendments. Depiction on an equal basis would show that the country, states, and localities would have to recognize them as such, on a daily basis, and work to remove impediments that hindered the exercise of their citizenship rights permanently. This type of resolution was not unique to theater owners in North and South Carolina, as they followed the lead of fellow theater owners in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee.¹⁷

The *Carolina Times*, a Black-owned and operated North Carolina weekly newspaper, reported that the theater owner of the Houston Theater in Houston,

¹⁷“Resolution Adopted by Theater Owners: Objects to Negroes’ Purported Appearance Out of Character in Movies,” *The Greensboro Daily News*, December 8, 1937, 1.

Mississippi. W. A. Rush – manager of the Houston Theater – wrote to the *The Independent*, the paper of the Independent Theater Owners Association Inc., indicating,

Producers had tempted fate but it remained for them to over-ride conventions and the insurmountable barrier of race distinction in “One Mile from Heaven” and “Artists and Models.” *The Hollywood Review* commented “undoubtedly the sequence in ‘Artists and Models’ with Martha Raye intermingling among the Negroes as a colored girl brought forth sufficient complaints from patrons to cause the above referred to action.”¹⁸

The Independent’s editor, however, fired back, indicating,

These Southern exhibitors object to indiscriminate mixing of blacks and whites in pictures, yet the romantic story the Southerners like to impress on those “damned Yankees” is that the slaves were loved by their masters and they raised the master’s children as their own.

Here we see a war of words between newspapers alluding to the underlying problem with the equal depiction and the contrary reality and rhetoric that supported it.¹⁹ Black Americans could raise and care for White children because they were in their place; however, any hint at social equality was not acceptable because they were out of their place.

At this same North Carolina meeting, theater owners voted down a resolution that would require federal regulation of the movie industry by a “board named to consider complaints of exchange men and exhibitors.” Prior to the vote on the resolution, theater manager Montgomery S. Hill noted that the “intermingling of the races presented a grave problem to southern exhibitors,” as it was believed White theater-goers would not patronize theaters showing films with Blacks and Whites on an equal basis. He continued, “So far as I know our people do not resent negroes in character roles. It is solely the negro out of character which causes resentment.” Hill further explained, “The negro (sic) in southern theaters as a character will always be accepted. People will always

¹⁸“Mississippi Theatre Owner Assails ‘Interracial Pictures,’” *The Carolina Times*, January 1, 1938, 8.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

resent a mixed chorus or any chorus where a negro (sic) and a white person appear, as it were, on the same plane.”²⁰ He continued,

The organization is entirely sympathetic with *the negro and his problem* and certainly has no objection to the appearance of negroes in white films *when and where their characterization fits properly into the story*, but it is our belief that the liberties that have been taken by the producers in recent pictures will not only cause unnecessary resentment on the part of our patrons, but *will undoubtedly create harsh censorship in many of our towns*.²¹

The tone of the language implies that the Negro is “other,” not a human or fellow American citizen entitled to all the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution. It also suggests that the problem is the Negroes’ to solve – not the lawmakers who write and pass the laws, and certainly not the White citizens who accept the laws, practices, and customs in the land of the free.

By 1937, Hollywood, affected by “the spirit of racial protest” in the United States, had reduced the percentage of “servile parts for Negroes” in films from 80 percent in the 1920s, to 40 percent in the 1930s. This popular entertainment medium was used as one instrument to convey the proper role and place of America’s Black citizens. *The New York Amsterdam News* and *The Carolina Times* reported that the offending films that spurred this resolution were “One Mile from Heaven,” and a sequence in “Artists and Models.” However it is just as likely that the film “Ali Baba Goes to Town,” shown at the Carolina Theater in late October 1937, two weeks after its national premier, and six weeks before the convention, was the subject of the reference to the “mixed chorus or any

²⁰“Resolution Adopted by Theater Owners: Objects to Negroes’ Purported Appearance Out of Character in Movies,” *The Greensboro Daily News*, December 8, 1937, 1.

²¹*Ibid.*, 1. Italics added for emphasis.

chorus” in the December 8th article. In this viewing, the tap dance sequence had been “mysteriously excised” from the film.²²

Bennett’s Black women students were disturbed by this bold and discriminatory action of local theater owners. Bennett’s Belles viewed this action as an effort, by White Southerners, to further control the public’s perception and image of Black Americans. If their resolution was effective, Greensboro’s Black theater-goers would not only be required, by segregation laws, to be seated in balconies, the “crow’s nest,” at local White-owned theaters; they would also be relegated to viewing movies that depicted only unflattering images and portrayals of members of their race in degrading roles, like minstrels in blackface. Often these representations included the portrayal of Black men as rapists and Black women as sexually promiscuous.²³ White Americans’ preferred image of Black Americans ran contrary to the years of work countless and nameless Black women and men contributed to pursue opportunities to educate and uplift themselves and the race since the end of slavery and Reconstruction. In response to this slight, Bennett’s students organized a boycott of local theaters, The National and The Carolina, with their collegiate peers in the Greensboro area. Students, led by Bennett College and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (NCA&T), issued a counter-resolution published in a January 1938 issue of *The Winston Salem Post*:²⁴

²²“Southern Students Fight Movie Mixing Resolution: Campuses Boycott Southland Theatre,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 19, 1938, 17. Lorraine Ahearn, “When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938,” *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*, ed. Naeemah Clark (New York: Peter Lang), 95. Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 204. “Mississippi Theatre Owner Assails ‘Interracial Pictures,’” *The Carolina Times*, January 1, 1938, 8.

²³Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 189-190, 195.

²⁴“Students Will Be Asked to Boycott!,” *The Winston Salem Post* Vol. 8, No. 37. “Theatres are Boycotted by Students,” *The Winston Salem Post* vol. 8, no. 37, Box 1: Scanned Photographs, Folder: Greensboro Protest, 1960s Photographs, Bennett College Archives. At present it does not appear that there is an archive that holds copies of the *The Winston Salem Post*. Ahearn, *When Hollywood Crossed the Color*

Resolved: That whereas the Theatre Owners of North and South Carolina, Inc., have passed a resolution to the effect, that all scenes in which Negroes appear “out of character” be cut from film and whereas the manager of the Carolina and National theatres have proven their intention to carry out this resolution, we hereby declare our intention to refuse to patronize these theatres until the resolution has been rescinded, or until the managers have changed their policy in re the resolution.²⁵

Here the influence of President Jones is visible. During his presidency, Jones was known to instruct Bennett’s students “not to spend money where they were mistreated.”²⁶

A second article, appearing in that same issue, called local college students to boycott theaters. Led by President Jones’s daughter, Frances Jones (BC ‘39), a junior at the college, Bennett’s students marshaled the support of students across the state. Colleges supporting the boycott represented an interracial group, including NCA&T, Duke University and Shaw University. Students also welcomed any interested “men, women and children” to join the fight against the further degradation of the image and character of America’s Black citizens. Their story and the planned boycott was picked up and carried in local and regional newspapers with a predominantly Black readership, including *The New York Amsterdam News*, *The Chicago Defender*, *The Carolina Times*

Line, 100. According to Lorraine Ahearn, the *Winston Salem Post* archives have not survived. *The Winston Salem Post*, like *The Carolina Times*, was a Black-owned and operated newspaper.

²⁵“Theatres Are Boycotted By Students,” *The Winston Salem Post*, 8, no. 37, Box 1: Scanned Photographs, Folder: Greensboro Protest, 1960s Photographs, Bennett college Archives. “Smart Theatre Owners,” *The Carolina Times*, December 18, 1937, 4. “What About it Students?,” *The Carolina Times*, February 12, 1938, 4. “1,000 College Students Fight Insults of White Theatre Corporation,” *The Carolina Times*, January 15, 1938, 1. Ahearn, *When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line*, 89 -107. Movies depicted nostalgic images of Blacks onscreen, frequently from the antebellum period. They portrayed characters that were submissive and subservient; or the characters they depicted in minstrel shows; or as they were depicted in old postcard advertisements, and in black face. Movie examples include “Birth of a Nation” (1915), “Gone with the Wind” (1936) with Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen. Movies that seemed to generate the theater owners’ concerns in 1937 included “Ali Baba Goes to Town.” The students’ protest drew FBI attention, resulting in a visit to David D. Jones, Bennett’s President and father of Frances Jones, the Bennett student responsible for organizing the protest effort.

²⁶“David Dallas Jones,” *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (Apr., 1956): 179-180. William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1980), 20. Ahearn, *When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line*, 94.

and *The Winston Salem Post*.²⁷ From the students' perspective, the strike was over the onscreen depiction of Black Americans, and their boycott targeted the economics that supported the debasement of the image and character of an entire race. Students viewed theater owners' actions as

a direct insult to the 14,000,000 Negroes in this country as it places an unfair limitation on the ability and attainment of the Negro Actor and that it undermines an inspiration from our youth which can only come to him from the successful members of the race.²⁸

It was clear to the students from the language used in the theater owners' resolution that Southern Whites were most comfortable with a nostalgic imagery of Black Americans popularized in the decades preceding the boycott. *The Winston Salem Post* supported the students' actions; not only did they publish their counter-resolution, but the paper also refused a paid advertisement from theaters that agreed to abide by the Theater Owners' resolution. Additionally, a January 22nd editorial in *The Carolina Times* acknowledged that the North Carolina Interracial Commission, for the first time in its fifteen-year history, took a stand on a race-related issue. The commission was reported to have endorsed anti-lynching legislation, in addition to letting "it be known that it frowned at the action of the Southern Theatres Incorporated," which opposed the mixing of White and Black characters onscreen on an equal social basis. Acceptable characterizations depicted Blacks as submissive and docile, often through caricatures of Blacks' ascribed behavioral patterns, which were often portrayed onscreen by Whites in blackface. The student-organized and executed boycott lasted approximately five weeks. It is not clear

²⁷Frances Jones is the daughter of David Dallas Jones, Bennett College for Women's first president. "Theaters Are Boycotted By Students," *The Winston Salem Post*, 8, no. 37, Box 1: Scanned Photographs, Folder: Greensboro Protest, 1960s Photographs, Bennett College Archives. "Smart Theatre Owners," *The Carolina Times*, December 18, 1937, 4. "What About it Students?," *The Carolina Times*, February 12, 1938, 4. "1,000 College Students Fight Insults of White Theatre Corporation," *The Carolina Times*, January 15, 1938, 1.

²⁸"Students Will Be Asked to Boycott!," *The Winston Salem Post* 8, no. 37, Box 1: Scanned Photographs, Folder: Greensboro Protest, 1960s Photographs, Bennett College Archives.

how the theater boycott was resolved, as very few newspapers covered the events.²⁹ The theater boycott is the first recorded act of public protest by Bennett's students and represents the initial public protest incident in the thirty-year period of this study, beginning in 1930 and ending in 1960 with their participation in the organization and execution of the Greensboro's student-led sit-ins.³⁰ It also represents their unmistakable determination to choose which businesses to patronize, and how they chose to envision themselves and their race. Belles envisioned Black Americans as productive and contributory citizens of the city of Greensboro, the state of North Carolina, and the United States of America.

To begin to understand the conviction and commitment Bennett's students exhibited through their protest and activism during the thirty-year period between 1930 and 1960, it is necessary to remember the foundation upon which these convictions were built. Bennett's founding in 1873 was grounded in the goal of the women of the Methodist Woman's Home Missionary Society (MWHMS) to give "to women of the Negro race the same advantages as are offered in the best modern colleges for women in the North." The College believed that to provide a student-centered education, it must acknowledge and recognize the challenges its student population faced when they departed Bennett's campus. Recognition of this reality offered an opportunity to teach effective problem recognition, problem assessment, and problem-solving skills. This practice endeavored to focus students' attention on "developing a sense of 'belonging'

²⁹There is no copy available of the *Bennett Banner* for this period. Coverage of the resolution was not located in *The Greensboro Daily News* or the regional newspapers carried articles on the final resolution. Ahearn, "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line," 89-107. Movies included "The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon," "How Rastus Got his Turkey," "Coontown Suffragettes," "Birth of a Nation," and "Gone with the Wind." "N.C. Paper Refuses Ad From Discriminating Theatre," *The Carolina Times*, January 29, 1938, 3. V. J. Jerome, "The Negro in Hollywood Films" (New York: Masses & Mainstream), January 1952.

³⁰"We Commend the Interracial Commission," *The Carolina Times*, January 22, 1938, 4.

and a willingness to accept responsibility” for their own actions and beliefs. Bennett’s leadership expected the entire college “family” to contribute to providing a student-centered education. This position was adopted because college leadership felt it was necessary to prepare college students and graduates “of sound character and clear head” to work in American society who could manage the “complex of confusion which seems to envelope our social, political, and economic institutions,” and who could “see through the pall to the eternal verities.”³¹

Student protest and activism at Bennett College falls into several broad categories. Most often references for this period can be found in relation to student attendance at conferences, speakers brought to the campus for special services, and community service projects. Very little information is found, in surviving campus-based literature, related to student involvement in direct action protest activity. What is evident in the available literature are ideas and notions of freedom, rights, and Black women’s role and place in American society brought to students by speakers invited to campus. Speakers frequently shared their thoughts on issues related to race, citizenship rights, and democracy, in addition to women’s roles, issues, and concerns. Students expressed similar ideas in addition to their interest in, and concern for, issues related to politics – local, state, and national elections; war – the after-effects of WWI and the imminent build-up to and after-effects of WWII; race relations; and their roles as Black women in American society. Additionally, students expressed concern about the availability of job and education opportunities for returning Black veterans, and community outreach.

³¹William J. Trent, “Editorial,” *Bennett College Bulletin*, 12, no.7 (December 1937): 10. *The Woman’s Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Forty-Fifth Annual Report For the Year 1925-1926* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Woman’s Home Missionary Society Methodist Episcopal Church), 78-79. The Woman’s Home Mission Society, Methodist Episcopal Church 420 Plum Street Cincinnati, Ohio, accessed December 25, 2014 at: <https://archive.org/stream/womanshomemissio1926woma#page/78/mode/2up/search/bennett+seminary>.

According to Bennett College Psychology Professor James T. Morton, it was the Negro college's responsibility, whether or not they agreed with W.E.B. Du Bois's Talented Tenth ideology, to look for leadership from among its own ranks. Morton argued, "Leadership should come from the trained and aggressive." Therefore, students would "see and know" the college "as a place where intelligent and piercing methods are used to aid the people."³² He continued, "Again, in a discriminating and chaotic world, in what other place could a race look with confidence if not to its own trained? When the college fails to train students for service by precept and example, it has little or no reason for existing."³³

Beginning in the 1930s, college-based literature reveals that Bennett's students were actively involved in several campus-based activities linked to national organizations.³⁴ Some were denominationally affiliated; others were branches of national and international groups. Among them were the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the American Student Union (ASU), the National Negro Congress (NNC), and the Methodist Student Movement (MSM). Conference attendance was one significant way Bennett's Belles exchanged ideas with other college students and learned about issues on campuses throughout the nation and the world. Conference attendance afforded Bennett students the opportunity to hear about national and international concerns from professionals in government, politics, and the religious and higher education

³²James T. Morton, Jr., "The Relationship of the College to Its Community," *Bennett College Bulletin*, 25, no. 2 (December 1937): 1.

³³Morton, "The Relationship of the College to Its Community," 1.

³⁴Campus-based literature includes *The Bennett Banner*, and the *Bennett College Bulletin*. Other published literature on the College include Lois Taylor's article, "Social Action at Bennett College," in *Opportunity Journal Of Negro Life*, an article in *Ebony Magazine*, "Bennett College: 'Vassar of South' Rated by Educator as finest Negro Girl's College in Country," and Mary Anne Guitar's article, "Bennett's Proper Pickets: Negro College Girls Must be Tough Fighters on the Picket Line, Young Ladies at Home," published in *Mademoiselle Magazine*.

communities. Bennett's students attended conferences for these organizations as well as others regularly throughout the three decades and held elected offices. Students also planned, hosted, and set conference agendas. Frequent selection of Bennett as a host site for conferences is of particular import, as it was one of the few places willing and able to host interracial meetings in a segregated Southern state.³⁵

The Thirties

In January 1932, Bennett College hosted the North Carolina Negro Conference. Several HBCU representatives attended to discuss issues, including the effects of the "present economic situation" on higher education opportunities of "Negroes in North Carolina," in addition to recent higher education trends in the United States and women's education trends. In October 1937, just three months prior to its students' movie theater boycott, Bennett sent Hattie Bailey to represent the college at the National Negro Conference held in Philadelphia. The theme centered on "unity and its ability to save the race." One conference session was devoted to issues specifically related to Negro youth. Edward Strong, National Chairman of the Negro Youth Movement in America, presented "How to Develop Youth Movements in the United States." The outcome of discussion and debate was that Negro students in both the North and South should organize youth movements to express their collective concerns and advance a political agenda that placed their concerns as citizens on local, state, and national agendas.³⁶

³⁵*Bennett College Bulletin*, 12, no. 2, (1938): 86.

³⁶"Educational Conference Held at Bennett," *Bennett College Bulletin*, 7, no. 3 (February 1932): 11. Representatives came from Kittrell, North Carolina College for Negroes, North Carolina A. and T. College, Johnson C. Smith University, Barber Scotia, Livingstone, St. Augustine, and Winston-Salem Teachers College. "Head of Student Government Attends Congress: Miss Hattie Bailey Represents Bennett Student Group at National Negro Congress," *The Bennett Banner*, October 1937, 1. Organizations included: National Negro Congress, Conference of Southern Students, National Defense Conference/Council, North Carolina Methodist Conference, Student Interracial Conference, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, NAACP Youth Council, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), United States National Student Association.

Founded in 1935, the American Student Union's (ASU) mission was to mobilize students in support of "an extensive reform agenda" for youth in America and against war. Its initial focus was on domestic issues related to the Depression and later extended to include international issues like WWII. The presence of the ASU was evident in the Greensboro area, as chapters existed on several local college campuses. Bennett's chapter was authorized during the 1937-1938 academic year. Representatives from these colleges faithfully attended district meetings in the Greensboro area. The representation of both PWIs and HBCUs reveals a proclivity toward interracial cooperation among Greensboro's college students. Students from the University of North Carolina (UNC), Greensboro College (GC), and Woman's College (WC) were active as well as those from Bennett and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (NCA&T). Students openly discussed issues at district meetings, including resolutions on peace, egregious penalties for minor crimes purportedly committed by Black citizens, and ASU's leadership positions, and they advocated partnerships with other student and national organizations. Bennett's involvement with the ASU included its students serving in leadership positions in both campus-based chapters and at the district level.³⁷

Bennett's students encouraged fellow Belles to participate in school and local elections. During the spring of 1939, students reminded their peers that both campus and local elections should be of interest to the college student population. While there were a number of Black citizens in Greensboro, estimated at 15,423 people, roughly 25 percent of its population, data reported that only a "few hundred Negro citizens" showed an

³⁷"Organization News," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1939, 4. "What's in the News," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1938, 3. "Organization News," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1939, 3. "Chapters which have not held Referenda," Series III – Youth Organizations and Activities, Box 21, Folder: A.S.U., National Executive Committee, Joseph P. Lash Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum. The document likely in referenced to "National Referendum of ASU Membership on Peace Policy No. 8718."

interest in voting as manifested by having registered to vote.³⁸ The low numbers of Black citizens registered to vote evidenced this. Low registration is best understood in relation to the practice of Greensboro's style of civility, which obscured the true state of its race relations. Another possibility is that intimidation tactics, similar to those used by other Southern states, were also used in Greensboro to suppress Black voters' ability to register and participate in the political process. Tactics included imposition of a Grandfather Clause, or requiring applicants to read, recite, or interpret portions of the State's or the U.S. Constitution. Based on the 1940 Census, the illiteracy rate for Black North Carolina citizens in Guilford County was 12.7 percent; therefore, the latter is more likely, since voting rights for illiterate North Carolinians had been revoked under Governor Aycock's leadership in 1900, while a temporary Grandfather Clause protected voting rights for illiterate White citizens. North Carolina's segregated and unequally funded schools directly contributed to this denial of voting rights.³⁹

Bennett students took initiative, implementing what amounted to an early voter education and registration project. They worked with Greensboro's Black residents to emphasize that registering and voting was their right and duty as citizens. The initiative, viewed in retrospect, is a precursor to the work Bennett students planned and executed with Operation Door Knock during the 1950s and 1960s. In taking this initiative, students argued that their actions were "as it should be ... the college should be the center of progress in any community, and getting Negroes to register and vote is a real sign of progress." The underlying assumption in their action was: if Black citizens registered and

³⁸Population by race was not reported for Greensboro, North Carolina until 1950. I estimated the population of Black Greensboro residents based on a ratio of White to Black citizens of 3:1 per Census data for 1950 and 1960, which showed Whites and Blacks were 74 percent and 26 percent, respectively. In 1960, Greensboro's White population began to decrease, while the percentage of Black and other residents increased.

³⁹ I was unable to locate data on registered Black voters. Social Explorer – Census 1930 United States, North Carolina, Guilford County, T41 Literacy (Black Population Age 10 and Over).

voted in significant numbers, there would be evidence and recognition of their desire to vote and be a part of the political process, and of their importance as a local political factor. From this standpoint, Black citizens could then advocate, from a position of power, for the services and needs of Greensboro's Black community.⁴⁰

Several community-service related projects were initiated and carried out during this thirty-year period. Among the first efforts was the launching of a nursery school in 1938 and an art school in 1939. Bennett operated the nursery school, located in Kent Hall, on campus beginning in the fall of 1938. The School provided childcare services for faculty and community members, and it was a successor to the laboratory school established at Bennett in 1931 by Flemma Kittrell. In 1940, the Nursery School Staff and Parent Council Association undertook a "widespread" program of parent education to ensure that the "city student group" was given the tools to connect with "girls" who were in domestic service and needed "training in the art of child care."⁴¹

The art school targeted local school-aged children with the goal of assisting students to develop "artistic ability" and "art appreciation." It was the expectation of Bennett's leadership that these classes would "enrich the lives of children who had a "transitory interest in art" and develop in them "a worthy leisure time pursuit." It is possible this effort was directly related to the Works Progress Administration's Federal Project Number One (Federal One), which employed artists during the Depression era.

⁴⁰"Two Elections," *The Bennett Banner*, Vol. 9, No. 4, April 1939, 2. V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), 209. Larkin, *The Negro Population in North Carolina*, 58-59.

⁴¹"Youth and National Defense Conference Held at Bennett," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1940, 1. "Organization News: American Student Union," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1938, 3. "Home-Making Institute is Held: Thirteenth Institute has 'Child Development and Parent Education' As Theme," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1939, 1. "Bennett to Offer Parent Education Course," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1940, 4. Emily Cahan, *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1963* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University), 23.23. Foner, *Give me Liberty!*, 907.

The federal government sponsored several artistic works and projects in the 1930s. Similar to this project, the WPA also funded music programs for youth during the depression. The Project “provided dignified jobs for professional artists, black as well as white.” In their most common form, Community Arts Centers, young people were able to receive art lessons from artists “employed as teachers.” Community arts centers were based in various locations including on HBCU campuses. The project also was likely a precursor to American use of artists as tools of diplomacy during the Cold War.⁴²

Bennett students addressed the plight of rural citizens during the 1930s, when just under half of the U.S. population, 44 percent, lived in rural areas. In North Carolina, that percentage was much higher than the national average, standing at 74 percent. By 1960, rural residents comprised just 37 percent of the U.S. population; in North Carolina, more than half of the residents still lived in rural areas, having only decreased to 64 percent from the 1930 level. County trends show a similar pattern of decreasing population in rural areas but at a much slower pace. Between 1930 and 1960, there was only a six percent decrease in the rural population. This demographic information played a role in the students’ engagement in work to alleviate the plight and hardships experienced by people living in North Carolina’s rural areas. Their engagement with this issue is evident in efforts to highlight the plight of rural America and the tenant farming community.⁴³

⁴²“Bennett Art School Opens, School Admits Students from Eight to Seventeen Years of Age,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1939, 1. “Black Printmakers and the WPA, February 23-June 6, 1939,” Leslie King-Hammond, Curator, Biographical entries by Elisabeth Lorin, Exhibit organized by the Lehman College Art Gallery, City University of the New York, Bronx, NY, 3, 6. “Federal Music Project Conducting Classes for Children who Can’t Afford to Take Music Lessons,” *The Carolina Times*, December 11, 1937, 7. Louis Guenveur Street, *Home Economics 1980: A Golden Anniversary*, (Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College, 1980), 1. North Carolina Collection, Colleges and Universities - Bennett College, Greensboro Public Library. Flemma P. Kittrell was the first Black person to receive a doctorate in early childhood education.

⁴³1990 Census of Population and Housing Unit Counts United States, Table 4. Population: 1790-1990, United States Urban and Rural. Census of Population: 1960, Volume 1 Characteristics of the population, Part 35 North Carolina, Table 1 – Population of the State, Urban and Rural: 1790-1960.

Economist Howard Kester, a founder of the Tenant and Sharecroppers Union, was invited to campus in 1939 by the college's YWCA to discuss "The Economic and Social Conditions of the South." Also, during the fall 1939 semester, Bennett's students took part in the Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina (V.M.C.) Conference where they learned about and discussed problems of rural life. Conference attendees visited in the Arundale (sic) community to observe living conditions of its residents. Each participating school wrote a paper on their visit, with Bennett's paper placing second. This conference work, like students' work early in 1939 with voter education and registration, was a precursor to further work Bennett would complete in the 1940s with two rural communities near their Greensboro campus – Mount Tabor and Collins Grove. Students at the College also facilitated the dissemination of tuberculosis information and screened an educational film to help inform the Greensboro community about the disease, its symptoms, and preventive actions. In addition to the film, students financially supported tuberculosis treatments for Greensboro's residents by hosting a Christmas Seals drive, with proceeds used to defray treatment costs for those in need.⁴⁴

Kester's invitation to campus is an example of an unspoken and often unseen connection between organized labor and the Civil Rights Movement. A union organizer, Kester, was devoted to improving conditions in the South for sharecroppers, textile and mine workers, and the unemployed during the Great Depression. By the time he was invited to campus in 1939, unions had become allies in the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Racial discrimination was prevalent in unions, in the South segregated locals

⁴⁴"Howard Kester Makes Plea for Tenant Farmers: Noted Economist Describes Plight of Underprivileged Classes in South," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1939, 1. "Bennett Aids on Health Programs: Movie Presented in Chapel to Emphasize Fight of Tuberculosis: Seals are Sold," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1939, 1. "Bennett Represented At V.M.C. Conference: Meeting Held in December at Bowil, Maryland, Discusses Problems of Rural Life," *The Bennett Banner*, December 1939, 1. To date I have not been able to locate the paper written by Bennett's students; additionally, the article likely should have referred to the location of the meeting as Bowie, Md., and the community as Arundel, not Arundale.

were maintained; and if Blacks were allowed membership, they were excluded from policy-making positions. However, once partnerships were forged, unions used their power and influence to advocate legislative reform, expose racial justice rhetoric, financially support Black protest groups, and demonstrate that inter-racialism would work.⁴⁵

Another significant marker of the 1930s is the attention students turned toward the after-effects of WWI and the build-up toward WWII. As early as 1934, Bennett students were attuned to the work of Alfred Nobel's conversion to pacifism. His desire, upon death, was to "promote the advancement of civilization and the abolition of war." By November 1939, students recalled the celebratory end to WWI and the world's search for peace "suitable to intellectuals rather than the peace, which comes through the crushing weight of bitter subjection." They concluded that "man" was "unable to guarantee" the promise of the Treaty of Versailles. Based on their assessment of international events, students asserted that nations⁴⁶

are armed to the teeth and have assumed the idea that peace is only protected by armed might. Imperialism has been revised to visit havoc on the weaker peoples of Europe. The terrible break that finally came in September [of 1939] marks man's forgetfulness of his good intentions and a reversion to heathenism once more.⁴⁷

Students also expressed doubt over the lessons learned from WWI; they continued,

⁴⁵Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 169-172. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (Mar. 2005), 1233. Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 51-53. Since publication of this book, Ibram H. Rogers has changed his name to Ibram X. Kendi.

⁴⁶"Present Age is the Age of Chemistry," *The Bennett Banner*, May 1934, 7.

⁴⁷"Present Age is the Age of Chemistry," *The Bennett Banner*, May 1934, 7. The majority of Nobel's estate was devoted to establishing five annual prizes for individuals who "had done mankind greatest service in each of the five fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, idealistic literature, and the promotion of peace." "Europe After Twenty-Five Years," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1939, 3.

We thought that Flanders Fields was going to be a lasting memorial for all time. We thought that the scarred lands of France and Germany would constantly remind us of the futility of war. We thought too that the orphaned waifs of Armenia and the blighted homes the world over would tell man that strife was useless. But they have not. Once more the cannons roll in Europe! Once more there are the patriotic (barbaric) goodbyes said for the front. There is world chaos – because man has chosen to forget.⁴⁸

The Forties

During the 1940s, Bennett's students continued to expand their outreach to the Greensboro community by focusing on health issues – a direct implementation of the revised curriculum, hosting summer institutes, partnering with the Mount Tabor and Collins Grove communities to improve sanitary conditions, recreation, and health services, engaging students in fieldwork, and offering a technical government course to prepare for national defense. Students also actively debated and discussed politics, the meaning of democracy, World War II, and the Cold War; education policy, women's career opportunities, race, their contribution to national defense, peacetime conscription, and adoption of the United Nations Charter.⁴⁹

Additionally, Bennett conducted summer institutes to address child health and problems teachers faced in the classroom in an effort to ensure the growth of "healthy and vigorous citizens to take their places in the democratic life of their communities." This emphasis led to the addition of an instructional program "on community leadership and citizenship." On campus and in the community, Bennett impressed upon its students the importance that "every student has a community responsibility" by virtue of their citizenship and made field work an important part of the education program. The college

⁴⁸"Europe After Twenty-Five Years," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1939, 3.

⁴⁹ "Conference of Southern Students To Send Two Delegates to San Francisco Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 1. Betty L. Powers, "Decisions Reached at San Francisco Can Have Far Reaching Effects" *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 1. Willa B. Player, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project" (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 131-132.

also maintained a working relationship with several neighboring communities for providing field study opportunities. Through student participation in these field experiences, the college assisted community residents' "work toward improving the quality of their community life."⁵⁰

At Bennett College, the 1940s began with an expansion of students' opportunities to participate in the governance of the college. President Jones welcomed the participation of Bennett's students to serve on the Faculty Council. Since becoming Bennett's president in 1926, Jones had included students into the "total life of the college" with the goal of giving them "greater responsibility and greater privileges." It was also during this decade that Bennett, under the direction of its Registrar, Willa B. Player, reviewed and revised its curriculum to ensure it was responsive to students' needs, and that it equipped them with the necessary skills for life and a career once they graduated.⁵¹

One of their first engagements with activism in the 1940s was the students' objection to the 1940 Federal budget, which called for reductions to several New Deal programs. Among the affected programs was the National Youth Administration (NYA), which was slated for a reduction of 30 percent. This action, if approved, would adversely affect the lives of nearly 41,000 college students and 119,000 high school students nationwide, who would be removed from the NYA rolls, including students in the Greensboro area. Just two years prior, the NYA had set aside the sum of \$70,000 to provide "graduate aid to colored students in states which offer no graduate facilities." Segregation prevented Black students interested in pursuing advanced degrees from attending colleges and universities in the South. NYA grants represented an opportunity

⁵⁰Willa B. Player, *A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College, Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference*, 20, no. 1 (August 1948), 10.

⁵¹"An Open Letter to the Student Body," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1940, 3.

for Black students interested in pursuing graduate level work to further their education. Elimination of the program would curtail “educational opportunities” for Bennett students and others throughout the country. Bennett’s students were among the group of students who petitioned against the proposed budget reduction. Their petitions, along with those from other college students, were presented to the meeting of the National Youth Congress in Washington, D.C.⁵²

Bennett’s students also pondered the crisis presented by the European build-up toward war in 1939 and 1940. Noting that the “European situation” was growing tense, they felt it necessary for Americans, specifically the American Negro student, to “rationally and scientifically” analyze the situation and contribute to reaching “a sensible conclusion.” Their reasoning for this was simply that Americans were not immune to the incidents in Europe, and that America must take a stand to prevent the “rapid progress of totalitarianism.” Students understood that while American democracy was not perfect, and did not live up to its promise for all Americans, “Negroes” were “much better here in America socially and economically” than they would be under the “Aryan group in Germany,” with its talk of the “‘ideal state’ of totalitarianism.”⁵³

The summer following the United States’ entry into World War II, Bennett ran a Summer Institute entitled, “Home Defense Workshop in Community Leadership,” with funding provided by the Payne Fund and the General Education Board (GEB). Bennett believed that one of the best ways to make “America strong” was to “build [a] healthful, happy, thoughtful family life.” The Institute was offered to “help teachers, parents, community leaders and others reach these goals.” The Institute was praised “as a symbol of the true democracy,” which could serve as a model for the rest of America once the

⁵²“The Federal Budget and the Student,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1940, 2. “\$70,000 Special NYA Fund Aids Negro Students,” *Carolina Times*, January 22, 1938, 3.

⁵³“The World Crisis and You,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1940, 2.

war ended. Addressing Bennett's president, David D. Jones, the Honorable Frances Bolton stated, "This workshop is seeking to anticipate the needs of the world of the future." Conference attendance was expected to "enable participants to gain new insights and techniques in the field of parent education and health and community service." The Community Leadership Clinic, held in two three-week sessions, focused on persons actively interested in community leadership. The workshop addressed seven areas about which the college had expressed concern via its annual HMI or through its community activism projects in the prior and ensuing decade. The areas included health and hygiene, parent education, nutrition, consumer problems, recreation and drama, home crafts, and community service.⁵⁴

The envisioned future included a world where racial prejudice and intolerance did not exist; where all citizens had equal opportunity based on their "ability and capacity"; where opportunities would be understood to be earned; and last, where men and women of all races would share responsibilities and a "common determination to build and sustain a nation where justice has been tempered by mercy and where citizenship is measured by integrity, loyalty and honor." Selection criteria for participation required a demonstrated interest in community leadership, and participants were expected to utilize the information learned during the workshop within their respective communities, either through clubs or other group work.⁵⁵

Bennett College and its students pursued efforts to alleviate health disparities in Greensboro in light of the 1940 Census data. As part of its Summer Institute for Home Defense in 1942, Bennett held a Child Health Institute. The Institute was held in

⁵⁴"Plans for Summer Institute Announced," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 1. Congresswoman Frances Bolton, from Cleveland, Ohio, was president of the Payne Fund. "Bennett College: Summer Institute for Home Defense, June 2-July 15, 1942," Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 1. Congresswoman Frances Bolton, from Cleveland, Ohio, was president of the Payne Fund. "Bennett College: Summer Institute for Home Defense, June 2-July 15, 1942," Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

cooperation with the North Carolina State School Health Coordinating Service to give teachers an understanding of “the relationship of child health to education” and included a “nutrition experiment with thirty malnourished children.” The Institute covered the following procedures: Daily Health Inspection, General Health Examinations, and Follow-up Procedure on the Correction of Defects. Additionally the Pre-School Clinic reviewed requirements for inoculations and vaccinations. During the Institute, the Bennett Nursery School was open and served as a “laboratory and observation center for Institute attendees,” in addition to its Health Camp, which ran for the first time in 1942.⁵⁶ In conjunction with the camp, the college also held a Summer Session on Community Problems and a Child Health Education Workshop. Its goal was to “help interested learners deal with two of the vital problems” that faced America during World War II. Those problems were identified as a scarcity of leadership and child health. Community problems included Nursery School Procedure, Food and Nutrition, and Community Organization.⁵⁷

Again, in the summer of 1943, the College ran its Health Camp as a collaborative project between the North Carolina School Coordinating Health Service and the general education board of the Methodist Church. Children admitted were from the Charles Moore and Washington Street Schools and attended for six weeks. The Camp provided daily meals, recreation, rest periods, and instruction in personal hygiene, and assigned chores for students to complete. The project provided teachers an opportunity to study and observe theories of health and nutrition at a time when these opportunities were

⁵⁶“Bennett College: Summer Institute for Home Defense, June 2-July 15, 1942,” *The Bennett Bulletin* 14, no. 2, n.d.

⁵⁷“Summer Session on Community Problems, Child Health Education Workshop,” *Bennett College Bulletin* 15, No. 3 (May 1943). “Bennett Camp Provides Facts On Childhood Health,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 18, 1943, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – Clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

sparse for Black teachers in the South. As a result of this project, significant instances of several “defects” were discovered among the campers.⁵⁸

The following academic year Bennett opened a Health School near its campus, using “Watch us Grow” as its motto. Implemented to demonstrate “the effects of proper diet, sufficient rest, wholesome recreation, fresh air and sunshine upon malnourished children,” the school was an extension of the Health Camp’s vision and an attempt to address its findings. Under the direction of the Home Economics Department, the school admitted twenty students from Greensboro’s public schools, and students attended the school between four and six weeks. While attending, students were given physical examinations and returned to Greensboro’s public schools after they demonstrated “sufficient improvement” in their physical condition. A teacher, Ester Carter, and the college’s physician, Dr. Muriel Petioni, supported the Health School, while Bennett’s junior class lent support to the endeavor by preparing menus, in addition to modeling proper table manners and eating habits during daily meal times. The underlying issue, which both the Health School and Health Camp addressed, was the lingering effects of poverty on health conditions in the Black community.⁵⁹

⁵⁸“Bennett Camp Provides Facts On Childhood Health,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 18, 1943, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – Clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives. “Significant Health Facts Discovered At Institute: Twenty Underprivileged Negro Children Serve As ‘Guinea Pigs,’” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 18, 1943, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – Clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁵⁹“Bennett Opens Health School,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1943, p. 4. “Welcome New Faculty Members,” *The Bennett Banner*, October 1942, 1. Ester Carter, a teacher; Barbara A. Ware, Director Home Economics Department; Dr. Muriel Petioni joined BC staff in 1942, but the article does not indicate her status as full-time or part-time; however, David Dallas Jones indicated in his 1947-1948 report to the Board of Trustees that the GEB provided a \$5,000 grant for the addition of FT physician to teach health and health education and a Nurse. Flemmie Kittrell to the High School Principals, March 31, 1937 from, Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

Community health programs were begun with the Collins Grove and Mount Tabor communities as early as 1944. In Collins Grove, Bennett students and faculty worked to improve sanitary conditions by purchasing and having installed toilets, in lieu of outhouses, with the cooperation and assistance of the City and County Health Departments. Home Economics students, at the request of the Mount Tabor community, started a nutritional program and launched it with a demonstration, showing the preparation of a balanced lunch to the members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Student teachers were also trained to “screen” students during their required practice teaching. This program, completed in partnership with Greensboro’s Health Department, trained Bennett students for issues they could potentially face after graduation as they entered the teaching profession.⁶⁰

Bennett launched a Community Health Education Program in the fall of 1944. Local public school teachers, enrolled at Bennett College, ensured that the program continued to operate throughout the summer months by voluntarily staffing two clinics. Clinics were located in the Mount Tabor and Collins Grove communities. The clinics were run to test, detect, and treat typhoid fever and diphtheria. Approximately 75 people received immunizations that summer – 50 for typhoid fever and 24 for diphtheria – with services rendered regardless of race. Children from Collins Grove visited the Health School on Bennett’s campus and participated in activities offered there. The activities included exposure to reading and storytelling; recreation, and a visit to the Windsor Community Center pool, in addition to tours of the campus and Bennett’s Holgate Library. In keeping with the health education theme, students also viewed a film, “Husky and Skinny,” in the Little Theatre. The college planned an expansion of the Community Health Education Program for the following academic year to increase student

⁶⁰“Bennett Community Project Progresses,” *Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1. The children from the Mount Tabor Community attended the Goshen School.

participation, as well as maintain programming already in place. Because of its health-related work, Bennett College received an award for the best college community program of health education from the North Carolina State College Health Association at its April 1945 meeting at Shaw University in Raleigh.⁶¹

Census data reveal that in 1940 North Carolina's 981,298 Black citizens had limited access to recreation facilities and activities. There were 22 public libraries located in 20 counties in which only 433,519 (44 percent) of the state's Black citizens lived. This meant that more than half (56 percent) of North Carolina's Black population were without freely available access to books in a state where the Black illiteracy rate exceeded that of its White citizens, in a state where illiteracy was used as a tool to disfranchise its citizens. Recreation for Blacks in the state made its greatest gains with the assistance of WPA and NYA programs. By 1943, just five communities provided recreation facilities such as swimming pools and parks that North Carolina's Black citizens could frequent: High Point, Raleigh, Durham, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro; four of the five also happened to be cities with a large Black middle class population and were also home to several HBCUs. Local communities continued recreation programs even after WPA funding ceased. Larkins's 1944 analysis of the Negro population in North Carolina reveals that there was a "great deal of concern" about the living conditions, "housing, employment health, and other problems," of its Black citizens. The prevailing belief was that "the inadequacy of recreational facilities available to the group was responsible for the high rate of crime and juvenile delinquency attributed to the race." Recreation in this situation was viewed as a means to help alleviate many of the vices present among North Carolina's Black population and to "build character." It does

⁶¹"Community Project of Health Education Expands Program," *The Bennett Banner*, October 1945, 1. Program participants were between the ages of 5 and 15. Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina: Social and Economic* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944), 47. Windsor Community Pool is likely the pool Larkins refers to in *The Negro Population*. "Bennett Receives Award for Extended Health Program," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 4.

not appear that lack of economic opportunities was considered or linked to the observed behavior. Both students from Bennett and NCA&T completed work for the community recreation program and home improvements. In the Mount Tabor community, Bennett students also focused on a program to improve community recreation and nutrition by working with Goshen School. NCA&T student Vincent Barnes led the playground equipment construction project where seesaws, sliding boards, and swings were built and installed for students.⁶²

In addition to the Collins Grove and Mount Tabor communities, Bennett's sociology students worked with the Goshen and Oak Ridge communities to stimulate community organization. Their efforts here represented an extension of the Health School Project. The emphasis of the earlier project was homemaking, health, and sanitation. This new phase sought to create partnerships with government agencies and other institutions, including churches, schools, County Farm Agents, and Home Demonstration Agents, with the objective of improving living conditions for Greensboro's Black residents and equipping them with organizing and advocacy tools for community improvement. Construction of sanitary wells and health clinics, establishment of drama groups to develop an appreciation of the arts, and clean-up campaigns to beautify and improve communities were all signs of Bennett's involvement with, and commitment to, Greensboro's Black community. These opportunities provided practical experience to students planning to pursue careers in the social work field.⁶³

Bennett students continued attending conferences during the 1940s. Attendance included denominational gatherings, legislative assemblies, and national and international

⁶²“Bennett Community Project Progresses,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1. The children of Mount Tabor Community attended the Goshen School. Larkins, *The Negro Population of North Carolina*, 45-49.

⁶³“Sociology Students Find Field Work Beneficial,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1947, 2. *The Home Demonstration*,” Agent. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Miscellaneous Publication No. 602, April 1946.

political meetings, as well as interracial gatherings. Students attended the North Carolina Methodist Student Conference in High Point, North Carolina in February of 1944 along with more than 200 delegates from 20 colleges. This conference represented the first time in its history that delegates from HBCUs were welcomed. Under the theme “Students and the Pioneering Church: Now and After the War,” the keynote was given by Dr. W. A. Smart, and discussion groups were led by Dr. Eugene Pfaff, Mrs. Baldwin, and Miss Brett. Bennett student Thora Kelly was elected Vice President of the Greensboro District.⁶⁴

Greensboro College and Bennett College co-hosted the Student Interracial Conference in November 1944. As was characteristic for this period, the Bennett campus hosted the majority of the meetings because the campus permitted interracial gatherings. Thirty-four colleges met in an effort to find a “Design for Living.” Principal speakers invited to participate in the Student Interracial Conference included educators and pastors.⁶⁵ Issues addressed focused on “religion, race brotherhood and constructive action.” Attendees felt that the group’s work should continue, and the committee made plans to formalize the organization, with representation from each college in attendance. Four Bennett students joined the permanent committee: Elizabeth Bishop, Theresa Neely, Ethel Johnson, and Gwendolyn Alexander. The group resolved “to work conscientiously to eliminate segregation in the transportation system of North Carolina.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴“Bennett College Students Attend Methodist Conference,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1944, 1.

⁶⁵Speakers included: Dr. Y.C. Yang, noted Christian statesman, Chinese educator, and President of Soochow University; Dr. Ira D. Reid, sociologist at Atlanta University, Editor of *Phylon Magazine* and Associate Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council (SRC); and Rev. Charles Jones, minister of the Presbyterian Church of Chapel Hill and Director of the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen.

⁶⁶“Student Interracial Conference Held,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1.

Segregation in Greensboro transportation was editorialized by Bennett students in the January 1943 *Bennett Banner*. Twelve years before Rosa Parks's actions sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the author tells a story of a student's refusal to move to the back of the bus to accommodate a White woman's desire to occupy the empty seat next to her in the "colored" section of the bus. The student summed up her stance, stating,⁶⁷

You fear my intelligence. You're afraid of my ability to handle imposing situations with a level head ... all I want is that equality that boys my color are donning the khaki for. Just think it over, you staunch Americans, why should I give up my seat because I am a Negro and a white woman doesn't care to sit by me? Some of you are quiet – I can tell that you are thinking ... thinking how many more there must be like me. Perhaps you go a little deeper into the problem and ask yourselves from the shackles of bigoted decades of Southern precedent, you'll wonder how you ever permitted yourselves to be so narrow ... so much for you, my friends, I've started you thinking.⁶⁸

Bennett College students participated in the Conference of Southern Students (CSS). The Conference's purpose was "to defend the ideals of human justice, freedom and democratic action." To that end, CSS met near the end of WWII; participants deliberated and agreed to send two delegates to participate in the San Francisco Conference in April 1945, where the charter for the United Nations was created. Students attending CSS voted to support the Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods proposals, which made the United States dollar the basis of international transactions, replacing the British pound, and established the United Nations as the successor to the League of Nations.⁶⁹

⁶⁷"Editorially Speaking: Through the Eyes of A New America," *The Bennett Banner*, January 1943, 2.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁹"Conference of Southern Students To Send Two Delegates to San Francisco Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 1. Students selected were from Meharry Medical College and the University of North Carolina. Foner, *Give me Liberty!*, 889-890.

Held at the University of Illinois in December 1945, the Third National Methodist Student Conference included delegates from forty-two states – 1,400 students and 200 adults. Bennett student Ethel Johnson represented Bennett as its official delegate. Speakers included Dr. Georgia Harkness, professor of Applied Theology at Garrett Biblical Institute; Dr. Benjamin Mays, Morehouse College's president; Dr. Roy Burkhardt, pastor at First Community Church Columbus, Ohio; and Dr. Eddy Asirvatham, professor of Madras University, India. Dr. T. Z. Koo, Secretary of the World Student Federation, shared his experiences in the provinces in China during World War II with the gathered assembly.⁷⁰

In December 1946, more than 500 students met to participate in planning the formation of the National Student Organization (NSO). The goals of this new student organization were:

To secure for all people the equal right and possibility of primary, secondary and higher education regardless of sex, economic circumstances, social standing, political conviction, religion color or race. To secure for students an extensive system of governmental and private scholarships and family allowances, the provision of text books, and school supplies free of charge and all other means of assuring material independence wherever necessary. To secure free medical treatment for students through medical insurance – the fees for which should be included in the tuition. To work toward complete student government and faculty student cooperation on all campuses. To develop friendship and understanding among students.⁷¹

⁷⁰"Students Discuss Problems of World Interest At Methodist Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1946, 1.

⁷¹Gwen Alexander, "Report on the Nat'l Student Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1947, 1. The National Continuation Committee was composed of 30 regional committees, the executive committee, and the staff committee. The function of the regional committees was to organize activities in their area, to raise funds to carry on these activities, and to publicize the Chicago conference and the national student convention. The National Student Organization was formally launched at the national student convention, which was to be held no later than September 30, 1947.

Students made plans for developing this new organization, which included deciding on a governance structure and activities as well as ways to publicize the organization to ensure maximum participation from all American colleges.⁷²

Dorothy Pearson, president of Greensboro's Intercollegiate Commission, represented Bennett at an interracial conference at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia in 1948. The conference provided an opportunity for a number of interracial organizations to meet, discuss problems, make suggestions for their resolutions, and learn from one another's experiences. Interracial groups came from several cities across the South, including Columbia, South Carolina; Greensboro, North Carolina; Kentucky State College and the University of Kentucky, respectively. Schools from Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee; Lynchburg, Virginia; and Durham and Charlotte, North Carolina were also represented, in addition to Ohio State College, Columbus, Ohio. Morehouse College professor, Dr. Brazeale, addressed the group on "The Relation of Students in the South."⁷³

Held in St. Louis, Missouri in November 1948, the Tenth Annual Youth Conference of the NAACP made plans to address minority youth problems. The conference's major objectives were:

To mobilize the strength, enthusiasm and organized power of youth to help carry out the program of the NAACP and special projects ... of particular interest to young people on the campus and in the community; to develop a personal interest in the problems affecting the Negro in America and to provide leadership training for those on whose shoulders will soon fall the full responsibility for solving those problems.⁷⁴

⁷²Gwen Alexander, "Report on the Nat'l Student Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1947, 1.

⁷³"Pearson Attends Interracial Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, May 1948, 2.

⁷⁴"NAACP Youth Conference to be Held in St. Louis," *The Bennett Banner*, October 1948, 1.

Attendees represented nearly 275 NAACP Youth Councils, 60 NAACP college chapters, and numerous colleges' interracial, interfaith, and social service groups. Under the theme "Youth on the Team, Not on the Sidelines," the gathering at St. Louis' Central Baptist Church discussed what role young people could and should play "in the struggle for democracy and for equal citizenship rights for all Americans." Attendees discussed and debated issues that included housing discrimination, segregation in the armed forces, and equalizing education opportunity. Presenters included LeRoy Jeffries, Assistant Director of Industrial Relations of the National Urban League (NUL), speaking on "Trends in Employment" and vocational guidance, in addition to training youth for job opportunities in the U. S.; and Robert L. Carter, NAACP Assistant Special Counsel, who addressed "Youth and Civil Rights," a topic that foreshadowed actions taken by students and adults during the 1950s and 1960s as part of Black citizens' ongoing struggle for civil rights.⁷⁵

This conference and student engagement are important because, despite using the courts as its primary medium to dismantle segregation, the NAACP was laying the foundation here with tactics, knowledge, and a philosophy for protests that would come to a head in 1950s and 1960s CRM struggles. The NAACP had a chapter on Bennett's campus, and NCA&T's students were also associated with its Youth Division, which had an influence on the planning of the sit-ins. The conference also shows that the NAACP not only pursued a legal strategy through the Courts; it also worked to engage and empower youth for the civil rights struggles that lay ahead in the decades to come.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Ibid., 1.

⁷⁶NAACP cases included *Murray v. Maryland* (1936), desegregation of the University of Maryland law school; *Gaines v. Canada* (1938), desegregation of the University of Missouri; *Smith v. Allwright* (1940), which abolished the White primary; *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946), desegregation of interstate travel; *Shelly V. Kraemer* (1948), which overruled the enforcement of racial covenants in real estate transactions; *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), which overturned the ability for state schools to enforce state laws that resulted in the differential treatment of students based on race and overturned the "Separate but Equal" doctrine of racial segregation; and *Brown v. Board of Education*, which determined that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional.

Bennett's students expressed concern about soldiers' right to vote during the war. Their discussion centered around two bills that aimed to resolve obstacles facing servicemen's ability to vote while on active duty. The Soldier Vote Bill of 1942 gave "voting privileges" to members of the United States' armed forces by "waiving particular voting qualifications of the various states." Two bills proposed a solution to the complicated situation. The first, the Green-Lucas-Worley Bill, proposed that the federal government be responsible for managing the enlisted men's vote. It aimed to "eliminate the red tape, irregularities and discrimination" that would stem from elections conducted by each state for soldier voters "scattered over the entire world." The second bill, the McKellar-Eastland-McClelland Bill, characterized as a "States Rights" measure, proposed "states revise their absentee voting laws to take care of the Military vote." It recommended that voting requirements "be the same as in the pre-war days, and that soldiers vote individually and not in large groups." Bennett's students objected to the McKellar-Eastland-McClelland Bill because, in their view, for more than 50 years Southern states'

control over the franchise has given a great body of non controversial knowledge.... From that experience it is hard to believe that in the "States Rights" bill sufficient liberalization will be effected whereby every soldier, regardless of Race or creed, can vote with the ease that the Green-Lucas bill would afford.⁷⁷

Bennett's students had no confidence in Southern states' willingness to remove voting barriers that hindered poor White and Black servicemen without federal government intervention. The unlikeliness of this was evidenced by the stand taken by 18 of 24 Southern senators who opposed the Green-Lucas-Worley bill. Students expressed their belief that "a stubborn political minority seeks to confuse and defeat the will of the American people." The Southern states sought to prevent "effective action in Congress

⁷⁷Cassandra Moore, "The Soldier Vote Bill Becomes a Great Game of Politics," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1944, 1.

on the military man's vote;" even though it was politicians who initiated the right for enlisted men to vote. Standing against the "States Rights" proposal, students called it a "makeshift and a fraud on our men in the armed forces." They noted, "It purports to prevent Negro soldiers from Southern states from voting at all," even though they were fighting for America's Four Freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. In their view, just as it was "a man's duty to fight for his country," regardless of his race, political leaning, or religious affiliation; it was also his right to participate in the democratic process by electing local, state, and national representation. They concluded, "A man's right to vote is certainly his minimum investment in the country he may die to defend on one of the far flung battlefields of the world."⁷⁸

Additional concern for servicemen's welfare was demonstrated in the students' interest in the reintegration of veterans, particularly Black veterans, into American society. Students vigorously debated the merits of two bills passed by Congress as they felt "failure to solve this problem adequately may prove to be more disastrous than the years following WWI." Their concern for veterans' welfare was spurred by knowledge that the federal government, during the Depression, failed to recognize the severity of the country's economic crisis. World War I veterans urged the government to provide an advance on their "adjusted universal compensation." The "bonus," as it was called, had been promised to WWI veterans to make good on a payment differential between draftees and voluntarily enlisted men during WWI. The original terms called for the bonus to be payable "no earlier than 1945." However, destitute WWI veterans demanded payment in the early 1930s to help them through the financial turbulence.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Ibid., 1. Glendora McIlwain, "Aid to returning Veterans Too Inadequate to meet Postwar Challenge," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1.

⁷⁹Glendora McIlwain, "Aid to returning Veterans Too Inadequate to meet Postwar Challenge," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1.

With this history in mind, the Belles believed that returning soldiers “must be integrated into one economic program before the nation can be restored to a state of normalcy.” Congress passed two pieces of legislation aimed at assisting the returning veterans “in finding and living a useful and normal life.” The first was Public Law 16, the Vocational Rehabilitation Bill, designed to restore the veteran to an employable state; and the second was Public Law 346, the GI Bill of Rights, which provided training opportunities for armed services members with eligible service time. Belles, however, expressed concern that neither bill guaranteed that veterans would not face the “ills of unemployment” that would follow the war. Of particular concern was the status of the “returning Negro war veteran.” Students believed that the inequality inherent in Southern society would color the administration of benefits, as it had with Roosevelt’s New Deal programs; their specific concern was the existing inequalities present in American education. They deliberated whether the federal government would have to become involved to ensure that each veteran received the benefit to which he was entitled, yet realized that “there is little or no room to believe that such supervision will be exercised.” The urgency expressed by Bennett’s students in 1944 served as a recognition of the need to act before the war ended to put in place measures to prepare for a post-war economy and stave off high unemployment.⁸⁰

Among the speakers brought to Bennett’s campus during the war years was Dr. Merze Tate, Professor of History at Howard University. Dr. Tate declared during her address that “we have not achieved democracy; mankind is more frightened today than ever before in history,” and that “people are disillusioned, because they know that only a partial victory was achieved. The outlook would be more promising if the white world realized, and considered, that the colored world wants its rights as citizens.” Dr. Tate

⁸⁰Glendora McIlwain, “Aid to returning Veterans Too Inadequate to meet Postwar Challenge,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 1.

viewed WWII as “a continuation of the imperialistic empires’ struggle for power, the indomitable spirit of the Russians and British saved the world from fascism, but that democracy for which our men fought and died still does not exist.” In her view, the normalcy to which the country and world sought to return was not sufficient, nor was it ever a reality for America’s Black citizens. She noted,

Here in our own country we still have to fight a war against Americanism in education. The Negro must still be conscious that his fighting was not in vain, for the democracy for which he gave his life, in reality, does not correspond to the definition of that idea. The idea of democracy being a state of equality, a way of life for all.⁸¹

She concluded, “Tomorrow time will be measured in the twinkling of an eye ... but truly death of democracy has triumphed.”⁸²

After WWII, students’ attention turned keenly toward politics and politicians. Mississippi Senator Theodore G. Bilbo was the recipient of a vigorous campaign to unseat him from the Senate. Referred to as “The Man,” students organized to support his ouster. According to the students, Bilbo’s ouster would “remove an outspoken member of the Ku Klux Klan” from the Senate and “break down the supremacy of the white race” that Bilbo had instilled in his followers. Further, his removal would “be encouraging to the increasing number of white and Negro citizens who seek the Democratic right of franchise and free election.” To this end, students circulated petitions from the Southern Conference of Human Welfare (SCHW) to support his removal from the Senate, indicating, “Every name on this paper means a little more pressure on ‘The Man’ Senator Theodore G. Bilbo!”⁸³

⁸¹“We have Not Achieved Democracy, Says Tate,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 1.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 1.

⁸³Lucille Brown, “Bilbo At The Crossroads,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1946, 1.

After sending student representatives to the San Francisco Conference to observe the proceedings that created the United Nations, Bennett's students reported that the South's reputation and its adherence to racial discrimination and segregation hindered the region's ability to move forward. Students raised the issue of the United States' struggle for world power with Russia, noting that it was our internal battle with race that was the thorn in the country's side, as "the major reason she [America] must struggle at all is because of her position in racial matters at home." Students noted that Russia capitalized on this fact by making "racial discrimination a criminal offense," shaming America on an international stage. While America fought to become a world power, elected officials in Washington, D.C. staged a filibuster against the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). Acknowledging this as a shameful act, Belles called our great democracy "weak" because "a few men," representing the Solid South, "prohibit the proceedings of making and passing a law that will mean well-being and happiness for millions." They also questioned whether "the people [are] so stupid they cannot select any better men than some of our senators and congressmen to represent them?" and whether the "action of a democracy [is] so slow that it takes months to pass a law?" Their planned action to deal with these circumstances was to recommend that students "must fight the entire system of prejudices against race and religion. If we do not fight and fight to win, ours is a doomed way of life."⁸⁴

Bennett's students also contemplated the role of women in national defense. Authorities suggested that women's place was in one of the following: the home, in defense jobs – which many women already held, or in the armed services, as some suggested American women should be drafted to serve in a "standing army." A 1942 poll of Belles regarding potentially drafting women to service revealed widely differing

⁸⁴Sylvia Rock, "Editorially Speaking: Democracy's Last Stand," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1946, 2. Mary L. Dudziak, "Brown as Cold War Case," *The Journal of American History*, 91, No. 1 (June, 2004), 32-42.

opinions. Some believed that women should not be drafted, while others believed they should only be drafted into service if there was no other choice but for them to serve the country in this capacity. Still others believed that women should serve because we demand equality in all other aspects of life; therefore, this was a way to be equal with men; while others believed women should receive technical and mechanical training in order to replace men in industry.⁸⁵

Bennett offered a Technical Government course in the fall semester of 1942. Army lieutenants, Mrs. Hill and Mr. Dutton, conducted “The Basic Analytical Study of Chemistry” course during a campus visit. The course was to prepare students to become scientific aides and assistants, and allow women to fill roles previously occupied by men before the war.⁸⁶ Bennett’s students noted,

If “Democracy” is ever to be made an experienced reality for everyone, minority as well as majority groups, it might be well for the countries now fighting to perpetuate it, to renew, at this same time, faith in the Christian philosophy of equality and brotherhood of all.⁸⁷

Bennett’s students were keenly aware of the effects of the differential treatment of Black soldiers on their morale. Dating back to WWI, they noted that the effects of this differential treatment resulted in a reluctance on the part of members of the Black community to trust that current promises to “make amends when the war” ended were true. They were able to see through the “promise” to its real purpose, that being “to elicit loyalty and postpone remedial action,” and ultimately “dodge the issue.” Belles warned that repetition of such a mistake during this war, “would be unwise” because Black

⁸⁵Constance Steward, “Vox Pop,” *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 2.

⁸⁶“Bennett College Offers Technical Government Course,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1942, 3. Participants included Mrs. Margaret Whiting, Mrs. Marie Bather, Misses Rosa Goodwin, Carrie McDonald, Carol C. Fripps, Demeter Kendall, Gloria Jackson, Ellen Brooks, Mary Hayes, and Mary Wagstaff.

⁸⁷“Bennett College Contributes to National Defense,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 11, 1942, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers – Public Relations – Radio Programs (WBIG) (1942), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

Americans had “retained some of their skepticism about their stake in the national enterprise.”⁸⁸

Roosevelt signed the Selective Service Act on September 16, 1940. Billed as a defense mechanism, it was the country’s first peacetime conscription and required men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register. Four years after Roosevelt instituted the draft, students polled by the Inquiring Reporter in November 1944 expressed mixed feelings about peacetime conscription. Nearing the end of WWII, students supporting it believed America needed to be prepared in case another conflict arose. Those against believed that the United States, if it engaged in peacetime conscription, was being untruthful if it continued war preparation after peace was declared. Supporters believed that peacetime conscription was a means of avoiding a third World War. Other dissenters questioned whether or not it was feasible for other countries to destroy their weapons as the United States continued to militarize its youth. From a religious perspective, many believed that there was no Christian principle that could justify militarism: “Peace, brotherhood, and fraternity of all people, regardless of race color, or creed can have no sound basis if it rests on militarism.”⁸⁹

Throughout 1945, students frequently debated America’s continued use of peacetime conscription. In his State of the Union Address before Congress on January 6, 1945, Roosevelt called for the “total mobilization of all our human resources for the prosecution of the war.” Bennett’s students questioned whether his speech was a call for the conscription of women into the war effort. Nurses had previously been drafted into

⁸⁸“Bennett College Contributes to National Defense,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 2, 1942, Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers- Public Relations – Radio Programs (WBIG) (1942), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

⁸⁹Betty Ann Artis, “Do you think that America should have Compulsory Military Training for the War?,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1944, 2. “Postwar Conscription No Adequate Guarantee for Permanent Peace,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1944, 1. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16595>

the war effort. Belle Rosemond Hogans believed that women should be included because the “man power” to which Roosevelt referred included men and women contributing to the war effort on the front line, and fighting for democracy on the home front by creating the “proper goods for war” that would ensure a “successful and victorious end.” Students took action by organizing letter writing campaigns to Congressmen, providing radio commentary, and placing ads in local newspapers. Under the sponsorship of the on-campus YWCA organizations at Bennett, NCA&T, and Woman’s College campuses, students engaged in a “united effort to fight peacetime military conscriptions.” The citywide campaign sought support from churches and schools where students distributed leaflets carrying the message that “‘conscription’ is not the answer to a better world.” Students’ protest efforts were intended to prevent passage of pending legislation in Congress. Bennett’s president also weighed in on the issue. Writing President Truman in late 1945, David Jones’s letter informed Truman that the students at Bennett College came from “twenty-seven” states. In his opinion, this represented a “comprehensive national cross-section of opinion of our people.” He therefore felt it was his responsibility to convey to Truman the students’ collective position. His letter, in support of students’ protests and concern, “strongly urge[d]” President Truman to end further use of conscription.⁹⁰

Articles on race that appeared in *The Bennett Banner* during the 1940s were directly related to the United States’ participation in World War II and its fight to protect the Four Freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech, and

⁹⁰Rosemond Hogans, “Drafting of Women a Possibility Under President’s Plan to meet Man Power Needs,” *The Bennett Banner*, January 1945, 1. “Responsibility In World Affairs Is Conference Theme,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1945, 1. “Colleges Unite in Protest Campaign,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1945, 1. “Our President Writes to Washington,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1945, 2. “Negro Women Advance As Pennsylvania Railroad Men go to War,” February 26, 1944, 6; Box 14, Folder: Dr. David Dallas Jones Papers, Public Relations – Clippings and Correspondence (1943-1944), David Dallas Jones Papers, Bennett College Archives.

freedom of religion. The appearance of these articles in *The Bennett Banner* reflects the students' understanding that their race would always be a factor in how they were able to live their lives as American citizens, and their willingness to call for and enact change in order to be able to more fully enjoy the rights and privileges granted by the 14th and 15th Amendments.

The Guilford County Interracial Commission and the Greensboro Intercollegiate Commission on Race Relations held their joint annual observance on February 11, 1940, with the goal to “head up the year’s efforts in bringing about interracial understanding and goodwill.” The Right Reverend Edwin A. Penick, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, gave the address for this observance.⁹¹ After the war, it was students who called attention to the challenge “minorities” posed to American democracy. The very democracy for which Black servicemen fought overseas was denied them in the land of their birth. Belles argued that the problem posed was on three levels – socioeconomic, political, and religious. A 1945 editorial contended that America must end human exploitation; eliminate White supremacy, and eliminate the notions of “we” and “others” so ingrained in American culture and end the preservation of White culture embodied in the practice of segregation before we could move forward as a nation.⁹²

In 1945, Bennett’s students were invited to the 2nd Annual Family Life Conference at the West Market Street First Baptist Church. The invitation was deemed “sufficiently important” that the college cancelled its weekly vesper service. Although invited, students discovered upon arrival that seats had been “reserved” for them. They were still expected to adhere to segregated seating, even though Bennett was the only college –

⁹¹“Interracial Committee Gives Joint Program: Purpose of Annual Observance Is to Bring About Goodwill and Understanding,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1940, 1.

⁹²“Editorially Speaking: Minorities – A Challenge to American Democracy,” *The Bennett Banner*, December 1945, 2.

“Negro or white” – that sent a sizeable number of representatives. Bennett’s students sharply criticized their October 30th visit to the church, declaring in *The Banner*,

And that’s the “Christian fellowship” we received. Race relations in the south, for instance, Greensboro, may well be “thought of” as good, because my people have been inhibited and repressed for so long they have eventually come to “accept” the “white man’s” condescending “kindness.” Ever since the days of servitude the “white” man has attempted to hold the Negro in check – socially, economically, and even religiously. *Everything* has been too good for the “black” man. Despite all the many handicaps to impede his progress, the Negro, has made remarkable gains in practically every walk of life mentionable. But his has been a hard struggle to win, his place in this “white man’s world.” A century of progress and we might as well have been at a standstill in regard to race relations.⁹³

The Fifties

By the 1950s, there was mounting pressure for racial change in America. The NAACP had scored significant victories before the country’s highest court regarding graduate education in the 1930s and 1940s.⁹⁴ Additionally, the decade would bear witness to what many came to hope was the death of segregation in education, and all public accommodations, with the 1954 *Brown* case. Yet, the desegregation effort was hard fought in cities and states across the South in its aftermath, as evidenced in the desegregation of public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955; desegregation of Little Rock High School in 1957; and lunch counters and public recreation spaces into the 1960s. Continued instances of racial violence, like the murder of Emmett Till in August 1955, and a boycott of White-owned businesses by Black citizens in Tuskegee,

⁹³“Editorially Speaking: And You Call this Christianity,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1945, 2.

⁹⁴NAACP cases included *Murray v. Maryland* (1936), desegregation of the University of Maryland law school; *Gaines v. Canada* (1938), desegregation of the University of Missouri; *Smith v. Allwright* (1940), which abolished the white primary; *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946), desegregation of interstate travel; *Shelly V. Kraemer* (1948), which overruled the enforcement of racial covenants in real estate transactions; and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), which overturned the ability for state schools to enforce state laws that resulted in the differential treatment of students based on race and overturned the “Separate but Equal” doctrine of racial segregation.

Alabama to secure their right to vote in the state, show how deeply seated racism and discrimination were within the country.

On the international front, America's Cold War rival, Russia, launched "Sputnik," causing international concern. In this social and political climate, Bennett's students questioned their contribution to this changing society, and whether or not they would make their own mark on society. They concluded, "It is not for us to sit back and relax, we should take advantage of these events." Students believed that, as college students, it was their duty to analyze the "problems which our nation faces [and the] situations and predicaments of the nation," to prepare themselves to be in a position to propose and develop solutions, so that when they became part of the voting public, they would be prepared to effectively advocate their position.⁹⁵

Bennett's students continued attending conferences during the 1950s, most focused on issues related to securing civil rights for America's Black citizens. The February 1953 North Carolina NAACP conference, hosted by Bennett College, had as its theme "Civil Rights in The United States." Conference participants gathered to hear speakers, including Herbert L. Wright, Youth Secretary of the NAACP, discuss the direction of the impending decision of the United States Supreme Court in the *Brown* case. Foretelling the battle to come, Reverend James M. Hinton presciently predicted that it would be wise of the court to condemn the "separate but equal" doctrine, which had been the law of the land since *Plessy v. Ferguson*. However, he believed that even if the court did strike *Plessy*, he believed that "white opposition to such a decision would be strong, and ... transition to non-segregated schools would be very slow even if the Supreme Court rules in favor of the NAACP sponsored fight for abolition of segregated educational facilities."⁹⁶

⁹⁵"Work Today, There's a Tomorrow!," *The Bennett Banner*, October 1957, 2.

⁹⁶"Bennett to Host N.A.A.C.P Meet," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1953, 1.

Bennett continued to host religious-affiliated conferences. Among them was a 1955 conference for the Methodist Student Movement. The theme, “Revolution and Redemption,” fell in line with evidence that a movement in the direction of ending segregation and separate treatment for America’s Black citizens was well under way in the United States. While no longer under the exclusive sponsorship of the Methodist Church, Bennett hosted visitors from a Pennsylvania Methodist-affiliated youth group who chose Bennett College for a case study in race relations. Their goals for the campus visit included: developing an understanding of Bennett’s curriculum – a curriculum newly revised in the 1940s to meet the needs of Black women living in a segregated society; sharing and discussing Bennett students’ living experience; attempting to learn the problems involved in developing better Christian race relations; and learning what the Methodist Church was doing in the areas of race relations and higher education.⁹⁷

Again in 1958, Bennett hosted the North Carolina State Conference for the Methodist Student Movement. That year’s theme was “The World Unto Himself.” The interracial conference hosted representatives from 27 North Carolina delegations and discussed segregation in college churches, eating establishments, and alcoholic beverage consumption on campuses. The YWCA similarly found Bennett’s campus environment receptive to host an interracial conference in 1957 under the theme, “An Analysis of Our Struggle for Human Dignity in Relation to the World Struggle.” Panels, workshops, and discussion groups included: “The Role of the Student YWCA,” “Leadership Training Opportunities,” and “Summer Projects.” The closing address was titled “Our Responsibility in the Revolution.” It is clear from the use of the word “revolution” in both the YWCA and MSM conference literature as themes and session titles that there was an expectation of imminent advancement toward the radical changes promised to

⁹⁷“MSM Conference Held at Bennett,” *The Bennett Banner*, November 1955, 1. “Pennsylvania Methodist Youth Group Studys (sic) Bennett’s Activities,” *The Bennett Banner*, April 1958, 1.

America's Black citizens in the 14th and 15th Amendments, and to women in the 19th Amendment.⁹⁸

In February 1953, Bennett sent two students, Belles Gloria Jenkins and Janice Dejoie, to participate in a Christian Citizenship Seminar under the auspices of the Methodist Church in an effort to increase international awareness among the college's student body. The seminar took place in both New York City and Washington, D.C. over nine days. In New York, students visited the United Nations, where they heard a speech on civil rights delivered by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the committee that drafted the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). In Washington, D.C., the students attended legislative sessions and visited their Congressmen. Loretta Free represented Bennett at the Christian Citizenship Seminar in February 1955. This trip, sponsored by the Methodist Student Movement, included students from across the United States in an effort to "integrate Christian ideals with the work of the United Nations and the Government." The group was again addressed by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt; John Lasso, Director of Formal Education from the United Nations; and Gerald Carnes, UNESCO liaison to the United Nations. Additionally, in D.C., students were able to meet with North Carolina Senators W. Kerr Scott and Frank Porter Graham, as well as Senator Wayne Morse.⁹⁹

Veronica Dean, a Bennett junior, represented the college at the YWCA Planning Committee Meeting, which met at the University of North Carolina on November 16, 1957. Here plans were made for the area meeting to be held at Bennett College in February 1958. The meeting goals were threefold. They sought to strengthen and improve

⁹⁸"Student Conference held at Pfeiffer," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1958, 4. "YWCA Conference Held," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1957, 1.

⁹⁹"Bennett Students Attend Christian Citizenship Seminar," *Bennett Banner*, February 1953, 1. Gloria Jenkins from Hartford, Connecticut; and Janice Dejoie from New Orleans, Louisiana. "Free Attends Christian Citizenship Seminar," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1955, 1. Loretta Free from Greensboro, North Carolina. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights was drafted between 1946 and 1948.

programs at the local level through provision of training and by sharing ideas. Local chapters were also expected to interpret the work of the National Student YWCA, NCSY, and the Regional Council, so that it addressed the needs of local associations. Last, through fellowship, local associations were expected to build understanding and provide opportunities for increased member participation in the YWCA's intercollegiate program.¹⁰⁰

In 1958, Pfeiffer College hosted a conference on "The College Student and the Changing South." Its purpose was to consider campus racial tensions "confronting the [S]outhern campuses." The conference, sponsored by a conglomeration of intercollegiate student organizations, had delegates present from approximately 75 Southern colleges. The interracial conference was devoted to discussion of problems and approaches to their solutions. However, there was no commitment to engage in an attempt to influence legislative action, debate, or the passing of resolutions. James Weldon Johnson, of the *Louisville Courier Journal*, gave an analysis of the current segregation-integration picture across the South and the social, political, and economic causes of change and tension. Other speakers included Thomas Ellis, attorney of Raleigh, North Carolina; James McBride Dabbs, South Carolina planter and businessman; Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College; Fred Weaver, Dean of Student Affairs, UNC Chapel Hill; and Will Campbell, National Council of Churches. Topics for conference workshops addressed campus freedoms, college and community relations, interracial contacts between campuses and students, emotional responses to change, preparing for desegregation on campuses expecting an interracial student body, and integration efforts on desegregated campuses. In addition, there was discussion on the roles campus student organizations,

¹⁰⁰"Veronica Dean Attends YWCA Committee Meet," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1957, 1.

including religious organizations, student government, campus communication, campus political action, and special interest groups should play in addressing racial tensions.¹⁰¹

By the end of the 1940s, many student organizations founded during the 1920s and 1930s ceased to exist, and were replaced with the United States National Student Association (USNSA) in 1946, a direct effort intended to suppress communist involvement. By the 1950s, USNSA presented itself as “the official voice of the students in the United States.” USNSA representative Kay Wallace reported, during her visit to Bennett’s campus in 1957, that the Federal Government and the newly created United Nations both recognized USNSA, and she noted, “It was one branch of the worldwide student movement.” Its purpose was to allow students domestically and internationally to voice their opinions “on what is to be done.” USNSA offered an international program and study abroad opportunities. While it purported to represent the student voice in America, in actuality it discouraged students from participating in any political and social causes or protest actions, a distinct reversal of course from the issues raised by students on Bennett’s and other college campuses during the 1930s.

Perhaps the most significant event of the 1950s was Bennett College’s hosting Martin Luther King, Jr. during his 1958 visit to Greensboro. As was the case with interracial meetings in the past, Bennett’s campus was the only location willing to allow the controversial Baptist pastor, who led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, to speak. During the visit, King shared his views on religion, segregation in Little Rock and Montgomery, and other current events with Bennett’s students. Discussing religion in the Black community with the Belles, King indicated, “Negroes are not inherently more religious than any other humans. Oppression, however, has made them more conscious of

¹⁰¹Organizations included the United States National Student Association (USNSA), Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), United Student Christian Council, National Federation of Catholic College Students, and the American Friend Service Committee. Pfeiffer College is located in Misenheimer, North Carolina. James Weldon Johnson, writer, diplomat and educator, is the coauthor of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, also known as the Negro National Anthem.

religious value,” as it served “as a powerful force” that would make a “smooth transition” from second class citizenship to first class citizenship “complete.” Regarding Little Rock, King conveyed, “The School crisis won’t set the Negro back,” despite the fact that many attempts had been made to inhibit and “keep the Negro from attaining his rights,” with many suffering “economic and physical reprisals.” In spite of this, Black citizens pressed forward in an effort to eliminate barriers to the exercise of their full citizenship rights.

Regarding the bus boycott in Montgomery, King noted,

The Negroes in Montgomery are more determined than ever before to gain first class citizenship. The bus boycott instilled within them a sense of great dignity. However on the other hand, the white segregationists in Montgomery are equally determined to keep the Negroes from gaining first class citizenship; they don’t want to give in, yet they see their failure in sight and fear it. The liberal whites are silent with fear in their deep concern and willingness to comply with the law.¹⁰²

Bennett’s students took King’s words along with their experiences as Black women in America and the work they had engaged in throughout Greensboro over the years and heeded the challenge posed to them in May 1958. As students prepared for commencement, they observed that “world history is a record of the lives of a few great men.” The class was challenged “to become the modelers, patterns and creators of what the mass of men strive to attain.” Clearly, the Belles saw themselves as contributors to history and as future leaders. They were admonished, “As you seek to find a place for yourself in the world, you add your voice to those seeking a solution to today’s problems.” It was carefully noted that they carried an extra responsibility, as members “of an oppressed people,” to build “a place in the new society for those of your race less fortunate than you,” and they were reminded that this challenge wasn’t “a burden, but ... an opportunity to repay those who have helped you attain this position.”¹⁰³

¹⁰²“King Gives Views on Pointed Issues,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1958, 1.

¹⁰³“Facing the Challenge,” *The Bennett Banner*, May 1958, 2.

By the fall of 1959, Bennett's Student Senate President, Roslyn Cheagle, challenged her fellow Belles with a timely question: "Where Do You Stand?" Detailing a litany of socially degrading codes of conduct Black citizens in the South were required to abide by, she challenged students to think critically about how they would live in an American society that tolerated their continued disfranchisement, degradation, and the imposition of social limitations based on their race. Her challenge appeared in the December 1959 issue of the *Bennett Banner*, quoted here at length.

When discussing and studying the problem of Civil Rights, two distinct groups of persons stand out, those who are against and those who are for Civil Rights. ... In order to decide to which group you belong, think and analyze the follow questions:

1. Do you go downtown and pay for a crows nest seat in the movie? ...
2. When entering a department store or any other public buildings are you guilty of looking for signs which say one race or the other? ...
3. When you are located near a Negro business, do you avoid it and patronize another? ...
4. Are you guilty of buying food at five and dime stores and standing up and eating it? ...
5. When going home for the holidays will you enter the front door of the station or will you go to the side door and holler for a ticket?
6. When you and your friends are discussing the possibilities of entering an interracial job do you say, "I am not interested"? ...
7. Are you guilty of "Uncle Tomism"? ...
8. Do you stand up for your rights as an American Citizen?
9. Are you proud to be called Negro?
10. When important meetings of the NAACP are being held do you say "well you know I have a history assignment to do and I just can't make it tonight"? ...

When you are graduated from Bennett and try to get a superior interracial job, the employer will not say, "you don't have enough history," but "I can't hire you because of your color." ... In this progressive age, every Bennett girl should answer these questions the way an integrationist would answer them. We ask each faculty member and each Bennett girl to think and act upon these questions while traveling home for the Christmas holiday.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Roslyn Cheagle, "Where Do You Stand?" *The Bennett Banner*, December 1959, 1.

Roslyn Cheagle's intention was to inspire the Bennett community, students, faculty, and staff to give consideration, over the holiday break, to an individual response and commit to action regarding treatment of African Americans in Greensboro in particular, and the United States in general.¹⁰⁵

Reading her words, the intent of her inquiry becomes clear. She is asking Bennett College students and faculty – and by extension, Greensboro and North Carolina's Black citizens – where they stand on the issue of racial segregation and the fight for Black Americans to have full access to their rights as citizens of the United States. She enumerates several personal liberty infringements that included: "crow's nest" – the balcony – seating at movie theatres, denial of the opportunity to try on clothing and shoes in department stores, denial of the use of lunch counters in department stores, denial of the use of main entry doors at public facilities, and limited career opportunities, all of which were based solely on one's race. Essentially, she was asking if the Black community in Greensboro was willing to continue to be complicit in their own oppression by not resisting Jim Crow laws. Her inquiry can also be interpreted as a call for action to Bennett's Black women students, as well as other college students in Greensboro, the state of North Carolina, and Bennett's faculty members. Cheagle urged them to "think and act upon these questions while travelling home for the Christmas holiday."

Cheagle's article called on the Bennett College community, at this juncture in history, to continue its long tradition of protest and activism begun in the 1930s, and demanded that America live up to the ideals outlined in its founding documents. The role of Bennett's women students in the initiation of the 1960 student-led sit-ins and its history of protest and activism have been overshadowed by the actions of NCA&T's four male students who received credit for initiating the student-led sit-in movement. Despite

¹⁰⁵"Bennett Juniors Get two NAACP State Positions," *The Bennett Banner*, November 1960, 2.

the slight of history, this article confirms what many have said privately, but few have acknowledged publicly – that the idea, meeting and planning space, and logistics planning were originated on the campus of Bennett College for Women. Just as Bennett had since its reorganization as a college for women in 1926, its students and faculty continued throughout the Civil Rights Movement to be at the forefront of fighting for citizenship rights, improving the living conditions of local Black citizens, and expanding the role, place, and voice of Black women in American society.

The actions of Bennett students and their opinions of these actions ran as prominently featured articles throughout 1960 in *The Bennett Banner*. The February 1960 issue included six articles on the students' perspective on, and involvement in, the protest actions. The inquiring reporter captured the following comments from four students in that issue:

Mamie Isler, a freshman asserted, "This movement led by the students of Greensboro is a definite step in the right direction for achieving equal rights for Negro citizens."

Polly Thacker, a sophomore felt, "The sit down strike is a courageous movement, in that it shows the present generation is concerned with securing equal rights,"¹⁰⁶ while Teresa Ann Brown, a junior noted,

We are living in a changing society ... progress cannot be hindered.... Many privileges denied the Negro are merely customs which have not been subjected to change ... it shows that individuals of both races are discontented with the present situation.... The movement was carried out in an intelligent and orderly fashion.... A movement of this type ... points out the fact that they [the students] are aware of their responsibilities as citizens of tomorrow.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶"The Inquiring Reporter," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1960, 2.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

Gloria Brown, a senior who became the Bennett College co-chair of the Student Executive Committee for Justice, indicated,

Prejudice is an expensive luxury in terms of the prejudiced persons on total interest and values. Myrdal ... entitled this idea the “inconvenience of ignorance.” ... [The] students of Greensboro should be commended for attempting to eradicate any practice which serves to undermine the dignity of a part of the citizenry.¹⁰⁸

She admonished students to “continue in your efforts to demand equal rights for all our citizens. As long as the rights and privileges of one individual or group are threatened, every other member of the society is in danger.”¹⁰⁹

In “The Negro’s crusade,” Rosa Lee Shaw stated, “No man has the supreme right to change these rights of others. ... Until we have equal opportunities ... we will protest, for it is our moral responsibility to do so.”¹¹⁰ In a section entitled “Reflections,” an unnamed author explained,

The cries that have persisted for so long are no longer valid.... For students to undertake such a dynamic movement as the sit-down strike in downtown Greensboro is as it should be, for the world of tomorrow is ours to do so as we will.¹¹¹

The phrase “as it should be” was used by Bennett’s students in discussing their voter registration efforts during the 1950s, and in discussing the college’s relationship to progress and its local community. Finally, an author identified only as Johnson said,

The prevailing cynicism and pessimism ... [is] outdated and [the] enthusiasm[,] which blazes from youth like foxfire, must be kept alive....

¹⁰⁸“The Inquiring Reporter,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1960, 2.

¹⁰⁹The Student Executive Committee for Justice (SECJ) was co-chaired by Edward Pitt from NCA&T, and Gloria Eugenia Brown from Bennett. Its purpose was to coordinate transportation between the NCA&T and Bennett College campuses to downtown Greensboro in order to maintain a steady stream of sit-in and protest participants, in addition to minimizing class absences for the students. Personal communication with Edward Pitt, March 16, 2006.

¹¹⁰“The Negro’s Crusade,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1960, 2.

¹¹¹“Reflections,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1960, 2.

The presidential election ... demands our full attention...."Civil Rights" has been reduced to the status of a football being thrown back and forth between those in power and those striving to be in power.... And a weapon in the hands of office seekers is ready cause for alarm.... Election year is a perfect year for vicissitude.¹¹²

The hesitancy Player expressed in November 1959 when students first proposed their plans for a protest action against segregated eating accommodations in Greensboro was replaced by full support when Greensboro's students began to protest in February 1960. Player was not alone in her support of the students. In May 1960, Dr. Frederick Patterson, a founder of the UNCF and Chairmen of Bennett's Board of Trustees, spoke to a local audience in Boston.¹¹³ There he noted, the "demonstrations should be reviewed against the background of non-compliance with the law by the South and the total pattern of discrimination." Students, in his opinion, were protesting in an effort to "break the logjam of inequalities." Clearly, the Trustees and administration of Bennett were in support of the resistance tactics employed by the students as they sought to secure basic civil rights. By June of 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr. began to connect the sit-ins to a larger national picture. He asserted that demonstrations were "not merely protests against the refusal of service in eating establishments. It also represents protests against such things as limited job opportunities for Negro college graduates."¹¹⁴

By 1960, the theme of the Home Making Institute had become a bold declaration for action rather than a call for the students and the Greensboro community to understand and address issues that affected Greensboro and North Carolina's Black population. The theme for the April 1960 HMI boldly declared, "Register and Vote: A Necessity for

¹¹²"Year of Decision," *The Bennett Banner*, October 1960, 2.

¹¹³"Dr. Patterson Heads Trustees," *Bennett College Bulletin* 24, no. 4, November 1956, 9. Frederick Douglass Patterson was a former president of Tuskegee Institute, a director at the Phelps Stokes Fund, and, at the time, he was president of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF).

¹¹⁴Brown, *The Long Walk*, 169, 171.

Good Citizenship!”¹¹⁵ The *Greensboro Daily News* reported on April 4, 1960 that John M. Brooks, from the NAACP’s Richmond chapter, addressed Bennett’s students, reminding them that Black citizens were not making “proper use of the ballot,” and that with proper use, segregation laws could be removed from the law books. In the Greensboro area alone, there were about “15,000 eligible Negro voters,” but only about 5,000 were registered. As part of the 1960 Home Making Institute, students volunteered to register Greensboro residents to vote. Approximately 95 percent of Bennett’s 477 students volunteered for the registration drive. Handbills were distributed prior to the three nights of canvassing that familiarized residents with the campaign. Residents were able to register on the same night; and because of volume, registrars opened their books on three additional nights to accommodate those who wanted to register. Bennett’s Belles were able to register more than 1,000 new voters.¹¹⁶

The HMI almost seems a direct response to the North Carolina Advisory Committee on Civil Rights’ (NCACCR) October 1959 report, and is reminiscent of Bennett’s early voter education and registration project in the spring of 1939. The NCACCR report indicated four facts about voting in North Carolina. The percentage of Black voters in 1959 represented a smaller percentage of Black voters than were registered “at the turn of the century,” just before Aycock approved the literacy requirement for voting that disfranchised illiterate Black and White North Carolina voters. County registration books contained “a great many names of persons dead or departed.” There were more White voters than non-White voters registered in almost every North Carolina County. North Carolina election statutes did not discriminate based on race; however, the report did make note that a disparity exists “between white and

¹¹⁵“Thirty-Fourth Annual Homemaking Institute,” Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

¹¹⁶“Bennett College Thirty-Fourth Annual HMI: A Report,” Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

nonwhite registrations” within the state. And last, this disparity was the result of the application of North Carolina’s election laws, “particularly the reading and writing test.”¹¹⁷

What, then, does their involvement in these activities reveal about their college experience? After reviewing the actions and thoughts of Bennett’s Belles, its administrators, and the partnerships established over this thirty-year period, a clear forward movement is visible in their actions and concerns. The college and students moved from internal campus-based development of students’ knowledge, skills, and experiences, intended to support and improve its local community, to direct action efforts that were visible on a national stage to a national and international audience. Over this period, there was a consistent emphasis on citizens’ right to vote, as well as a focus on maintaining and improving individuals’ and the community’s health, and the role of elected officials to truly represent the best interests of the people. Further, students insisted on interjecting their voices into the public discourse on issues related to their local community, the nation, and the world. They felt it was their right to speak, not only for themselves, but also for those whose best interests had not been addressed by politicians on the local, state, and national levels.

Given this, what can be concluded or understood about Black women’s higher education experiences during this time period? This study reveals that the time this group of Black women spent at Bennett was a time for them to find their role, place, and voice. Students at Bennett engaged in traditional undergraduate activities. From Bennett’s location, social environment, and the manner in which its administration and faculty deliberately crafted the learning and living environment on campus, it can be concluded

¹¹⁷“North Carolina Advisory Committee on Civil Rights, Voting Participation in North Carolina,” October 2, 1959, Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives. Dorothy Benjamin, “Part of Plight Of Negro Laid to Poor Voting,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 4, 1960, 1-B. “Civic Minded Students Register 1,000 Negroes,” Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

that the higher education experience of Bennett's students represented an opportunity to be exposed to, and immersed in, the social issues that affected their lives. They lived and learned in an environment that affirmed their right to be who they were and express opinions that reflected their needs as Black women, and as citizens on issues of concern to them, the Black community, and America in general. Students were empowered. They were able to engage in planning and execution of actions that changed living conditions for themselves and their fellow citizens. They also kept abreast of local, state, national, and international issues based on facts, which broadened their worldview and vision, built skills, and helped them to form positions and debate issues. Last, their experience at Bennett College provided an education that placed these women in a position that allowed them to break away from the traditional roles, places, and occupations reserved specifically for Black women and enter careers in fields that interested them.

Bennett's students' participation in protest and activism challenged the gender roles, norms, and expectations of Black women during the early twentieth century. The implication of the students' protest and activism, and the college's support of these actions, reveals the vision Bennett had for its students, and the lives and roles they were expected to fill after college graduation. Bennett and its Belles envisioned Black Americans as productive and contributory citizens of the city of Greensboro, the state of North Carolina, and the United States of America and the world. The college sought to create America's future leaders by empowering, inspiring, and instilling in its students a sense of social justice to ensure that they became constructive and participatory American citizens.

Conclusion

Matthews and Prothro offered a profile of Negro student protestors of the 1950s and 1960s, based on their study of the students' involvement in protest movements. The

waves of 1960s protestors were likely the children of students who completed college during the late 1930s and 1940s. Born just prior to World War II, these student protestors were overwhelmingly female, and many were reared in urban environments, a characteristic Jones highlighted about Bennett's student population in the late 1940s.¹¹⁸ Most were from middle class homes; and social class origin was the most significant indicator of a student's participation in protests. This finding supports the notion advanced by Brinton and Hoffer that those seeking upward mobility are most likely to agitate for change.¹¹⁹ Because, as a whole, "very few Negroes" had "educational opportunities" like these young men and women, protestors were considered "fortunate youngsters." The researchers found that protest participants were largely concentrated in the humanities (46 percent). Matthews and Prothro believe this group traditionally had an interest in "learning as an end in itself," because during the course of their studies, they became "thoroughly committed to the universalistic value system of the western world" that was at odds with the "southern racial realities."¹²⁰

Distinguished from their elders by a willingness to overtly express their discontent with the state of race relations in the South, the "liberalized" and "idealistic" protestors of the 1950s and 1960s engaged in bold actions aimed at breaking Southern customs and Jim Crow practices. To many observers, adults in the African American community appeared to be more content with the status quo, and in many instances were unwilling to

¹¹⁸Donald Matthews and James Prothro, "Negro Students and the Protest Movement," in *Black Power and Student Rebellion*, eds. James McEvoy and Abraham Miller (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. 1969), 390. Matthews and Prothro indicate that one-third of the students who participated in their study and had been "raised in large cities personally took part in the protests"; the percent for students raised on farms was "only 15 percent."

¹¹⁹Matthews and Prothro, "Negro Students and the Protest Movement," 391. Over half the students from families with an annual income of over \$6,000 personally participated in the demonstration or belonged to protest groups, but only 6 percent of the students from families with an income of less than \$2,000 were active.

¹²⁰Matthews and Prothro, "Negro Students and the Protest Movement," 407.

engage in direct actions as the students did; this observation is characteristic of the ways power relationships in the South allowed Black citizens to express, or not express, their discontent with the state of race relations.¹²¹ While noting their discontent with the status of race relations, students active in the protest were characterized as more “tolerant, understanding, and optimistic about white people and segregation” than their counterparts who did not participate.¹²² Student participants were also knowledgeable of “the world outside the South and the Negro ghetto.” This cohort had not only consistently read newspapers and magazines, watched television, listened to radio broadcasts addressing current events and issues, and attended lectures by religious, cultural, and political figures, but also had “frequent personal contact with whites” and traveled outside the South. Evidence of this could be found in the contents of *The Bennett Banner* over the thirty-year period, as well as the exposure Bennett provided to its students through speakers brought to campus and conference attendance and participation. In short, they were engaged with society and social issues. This knowledge and experience, similar to the veterans’ experiences, served to create “new standards” that made a “once comfortable status increasingly unbearable.”¹²³

¹²¹Ibid., 392. “Views Given On Sitdowns By Marshall,” *Greensboro Daily News*, 21 March 1960, A-1. “Over 1,000 Hear Negro Leader,” *Greensboro Daily News*, 4 April 1960, A-1.

¹²²Matthews and Prothro, “Negro Students and the Protest Movement,” 394.

¹²³Matthews and Prothro, “Negro Students and the Protest Movement,” 396.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Race played a significant role in the education of American women during the early twentieth century, particularly in the South. It resulted in differential provision of education to Black women, as it had to Black Americans in general. Bennett sought to change this by intentionally educating their students to become engaged and participatory American citizens. This dissertation on the work of Bennett College for Women changes the understanding of Black women's higher education experience. In this conclusion, I review the work of Bennett College for Women as it re-envisioned the role, place and voice, of black women in American society, assessing their work against the research and recommendations of black women scholars and administrators who studied black women's higher education. I also identify future areas of research related to this topic.

While a few Black women were able to attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), the majority attended coeducational Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Education for White women was to develop "homemaker skills," reinforcing their role as wives and mothers, and provide a milieu for finding a spouse. Conversely, for Black women, education was to serve as a vehicle for "race uplift," specifically to improve the conditions under which the entire race lived; not for their own personal interest or fulfillment. Black women's prior enslavement imposed itself on the perception of their ability to maintain families and households, and their worthiness of respect. Therefore, many schools imposed restrictive rules to govern their behavior. The same

homemaking skills taught to White women were provided to Black women. However, their purpose in the education of Black women was so they could fill their prescribed roles and places in American society; their purpose was not envisioned to be of use to care for themselves, their family, or their home.

College education in America was designed to produce scholars and to “furnish leadership for the masses of people.”¹ For America’s Black citizens, education was used to prepare them for the roles society ascribed to them to fill. It was typically fashioned to keep Black Americans in a subordinate social and economic status within the United States, particularly in the South. This dual function of education reflected America’s struggle with race and its willingness to accept its Black citizens on an equal basis. The struggle was evident in its provision of education, and its control ultimately determined and defined the social reality of Black citizens in the South. This was evident in the structure of social relationships and the civility of Southern society, particularly in Bennett’s hometown and state – Greensboro and North Carolina – throughout most of the twentieth century.²

HBCUs grew and were shaped in the midst of this struggle. The funding they received from prominent philanthropists and philanthropic organizations shaped the institutions. The results of these gifts and their ability to shape institutional curricula contributed to the perception that HBCUs were “politically repressive [and] socially conservative.” Studying the actions of Bennett College for Women during this thirty-year period refutes this argument. Bennett College and its students’ behavior may have been socially conservative, but they were not politically repressed; rather, Bennett students

¹Lucy D. Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 354.

²James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1- 2, 279, 281. Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), xv, xvi, xxi and xxii.

exhibited a “political radicalism.” The words written and spoken by Bennett’s students, faculty, and its leadership and the actions taken by Bennett College’s students took place at a time and in a region of the country where acting outside the roles prescribed and considered acceptable for black Americans could result in arrest, harm or death. From its reorganization as a college for women, Bennett intentionally set about the task of creating a college that gave black women the same opportunities and advantages offered to women “in the best modern colleges for women in the North ... for the training of women for larger life usefulness.”³

This usefulness, as interpreted by the Jones and Player team, was to be determined by the student herself, and no one else. Despite this general perception of HBCUs, the case of Bennett College reveals that not all HBCUs stifled their students’ opinions and voices when they sought opportunities to express their concern, or evidenced a desire to improve their lives and those of other black Americans who lived domestically and abroad. The best way to assess Bennett’s student’s civic engagement and activism was to review the school’s newspaper along with local black owned and operated newspapers. The historical narratives drawn from these sources, helps change the dominant narrative when the voices of the oppressed are added to the analysis and interpretation of history. These voices illuminate the experience of “others” in America. They represent and tell an unknown and hidden history of the experiences of black Americans in the segregated South from the perspective of those who have lived and continue to live out its legacy. Their inclusion helps to tell a more inclusive history of America, its higher education institutions, and its students’ experiences.

³ Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2013), 2, 6. The Woman’s Home Mission Society, *Forty-Fifth Annual Report For the Year 1925 – 1926*, (Ohio: The Woman’s Home Mission Society of the Methodist Episcopal church, 1926), 78-79. Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 224.

In the segregated South single sex HBCUs, like Bennett and Spelman, had unique missions to educate black women. Given the prevalent beliefs about black women's lack of morality and their intellectual inferiority, many believed that they could not and should not be educated at all. If they were educated, it should be to fill their prescribed place in society, "the good and dutiful wife and mother and the respectable and humble black person."⁴ The college's main focus was to address the needs of Black women. The most urgent need was addressing Black women's multiple identities and the roles society expected Black women to play. By virtue of their gender and race, Black American women had to surmount barriers of sex and color while living in at least two separate worlds, "America and Negro America." Several scholars go further and assert that Black women's lives were couched in multiple identities. Acknowledging Black women's complicated identities reveals the multiple "consciousnesses" with which they live. This multi-consciousness encompasses several aspects of Black women's identity that shape their lived experience – race, gender, socioeconomic status, citizenship, and the intersection of their race and gender. The addition of region, which played a major role in the case of Bennett College, further complicated Black women's roles and identities.⁵

Student protest and activism began during the early twentieth century in the United States. The creation of youth organizations during the Progressive Era contextualized and normalized organized group activities for youth in American society; it also prepared youth for working with student organizations once they entered college. American

⁴Linda M. Perkins, "The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century," in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*, eds. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 64-65.

⁵Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 152-153. Patricia Bell-Scott, "Blacks Women's Higher Education," *Sage Magazine* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 8-11. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 1, 72, 181.

college students began organizing in the 1920s and 1930s, advocating for economic and social reforms during the Great Depression. Students protested at the White House in 1937 to bring national attention to the plight of impoverished youth. Protest activity during the 1940s and 1950s was barely noticeable, as antiwar pacifist organizations created in the 1930s disappeared and were replaced with pro-war, anti-communist organizations, and others that fought for civil rights and academic freedom, in addition to taking stances against racism and sexism.⁶

Black students actively engaged in protest and activism as well. Their actions originated in the New Negro Campus Movement (NNCM), part of the Long Black Student Movement (LBSM). Similar to the CRM, the LBSM began before its manifestation was visible and acknowledged on a large scale. Activity occurred on different college campuses over the course of a century. Black students' protests were scattered and disconnected; they also dated back to the late nineteenth century prior to the "the appearance of the New Negro on campus in 1919." Black students' early activities consisted of raising their voices against "antebellum abolitionist and colonization movements," and rendering "fiery speeches." Protests originating at HBCUs, during the late nineteenth century, were directed at curricular offerings and campus life issues. In the early twentieth century, students on HBCU campuses protested issues including off-campus segregation, women's suffrage, and anti-lynching campaigns. On-campus issues

⁶Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 855. Boren, *Student Resistance*, 1, 2, 4, 8-21, 57-121. Student organizations formed between 1920-1939 include: National Student Forum (NSF), National Student Federation (NSF), National Student League (NSL), Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), American Student Union (ASU), American Youth Congress (AYC), Southern Negro Youth Conference (SNYC). Student organizations formed between 1940 and 1959 include: Student Defenders of Democracy (SDD), Student League of America (SLA), United States Student Assembly (USSA), Socialist Youth League (SYL), Young Progressives of America (YPA), Labor Youth League (LYL), United World Federalists (UWF), American Association of University Students for Academic Freedom (AAUSAF), National Student Association (NSA), Students for Democratic Action (SDA), SANE, SLATE, Student Peace Union (SPU), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Youth organizations created included Woodcraft Indians, Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 51-52.

included the appointment of Black presidents as well as a Black Dean of Women, fighting against required Saturday school classes, and changes to students' scheduled dating time. Viewed collectively, their action and activities, between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s, focused "on accruing off-campus civil rights." Their protests related to off-campus issues are evidence that Black students were keenly focused on changing their collective social condition, and were not complacent or accepting of their social and economic status within the United States.⁷

Bennett College students were referred to as Bennett Belles. Bennett's selection and use of the term was likely related to the idea of the Southern Belle, a term used by Southerners to describe wealthy White women in the South prior to the Civil War. They were upper middle class women, married to plantation owners whose wealth was derived from the slave trade. Alternately, the bell imagery could have been an allusion to Lyman Bennett's 1878 gift of a bell, described as "the oldest resource on the campus," to the college. The bell now hangs in a structure erected in March 1953 and is inscribed with a Bible verse from the book of Isaiah 61:1, which reads, "Proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Use of the term to describe their students and alumnae may also have been a reference to the college's interpretation of the bell's inscription as a call for Bennett, its students, faculty, and alumnae to participate in the full liberation of America's Black citizens.⁸

⁷Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012)29, 30-34. "Howard University Students Picket National Crime Conference in D.C.," International News Press, Inc. December 1934, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, included in *One Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North*, exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY April 3-September 7, 2015.

⁸United States Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Bennett College Historic District, February 12, 1992, accessed December 31, 2016. Bennett's bell was cast in 1878 by Meneely & Kimberly Foundry of Troy, New York.

Whatever the case for choosing this description, Bennett College purposely employed this modified description of Southern womanhood, and as liberators, to refer to its students and alumnae. Its decision was a step toward re-envisioning Black womanhood from the Black woman's perspective. Bennett's version of Black womanhood was reimagined without its connection to the harsh reality of slavery and negative images of Black women perpetuated by White America. It did not carry the common negative connotations often associated with and ascribed to Black womanhood. Boldly, the college stated that their students and alumnae were to be seen as American ladies and American citizens worthy of the respect and dignity that too often eluded them. The Bennett Belle represented not only herself, but also her family, school, and community. She was an elegant and orderly woman. Bennett's Belles' existence was a constant affront to the stereotypes and caricatures heaped on the shoulders of Black women. Former presidents of the college eschewed the elitist characterizations of Bennett's students and alumnae because the characterizations did not represent the core and purpose of the education Bennett College provided. However, this perception of the college's purpose seemed to work in its favor, as it was able to teach, encourage, and empower its students without intense scrutiny from external or internal stakeholders. Underlying this outward presentation of Bennett's Belles was a call to society to recognize these college women, and all Black women, as respectable.⁹

To understand the conviction and commitment Bennett's students exhibited toward community involvement over this thirty-year period, it is necessary to recall the foundation on which these convictions were built. The College believed that, in order to provide a student-centered education, it was necessary to recognize the challenges its students would face when they departed Bennett's campus. Recognition of this reality

⁹Linda Beatrice Brown, *The Long Walk: The Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College* (Danville, Va.: Bennett College Women's Leadership Institute, 1998), 127, 189. A Belle is popular and attractive girl or woman whose charm and beauty make her a favorite.

offered the opportunity to teach students effective problem recognition, problem assessment, and problem-solving skills. This practice endeavored to focus student attention on “developing a sense of ‘belonging’ and a willingness to accept responsibility” for their actions and beliefs. The entire college family participated in the student-centered education of the college. This position was adopted because college leaders felt it was necessary to prepare college students and graduates “of sound character and clear head” to work in an American society that could manage the “complex of confusion which seems to envelope our social, political, and economic institutions” and to “see through the pall to the eternal verities.”¹⁰

Bennett College’s program addressed education challenges identified as important for Black women’s education by Black women administrators and scholars. I return briefly to Slowe and Cuthbert’s research findings and conclusions to review them against actions taken by Bennett College to revise its curriculum, and develop and expand its co-curricular activities in an effort to improve higher education for Black women. From this review, I conclude that Jones and Player enacted an education program at Bennett College that worked to address many of the issues and concerns raised by Slowe’s 1930s research regarding Black women’s higher education. Many HBCUs, including Bennett College, during their early years focused on the preparation of teachers and ministers. The need for teachers during this period was urgent and heavily emphasized because of the emancipation of an estimated four million men, women, and children, many of whom had not received any education; nor were they considered Americans with any claims to citizenship rights immediately after the Civil War.¹¹

¹⁰William J. Trent, Jr., “Editorial,” *Bennett College Bulletin* 12, no. 7 (December 1937): 10.

¹¹James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage, Freedom and Education of Black People* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 155-157. Willa Player, “*Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project*” (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 1.

The need to provide education to the freed men, women, and children was seen as the pathway to incorporate them into American society. Provision of a basic education to this and subsequent generations was a first step in meeting the citizenship needs of this population. Teaching therefore was viewed as a respectable occupation for women and an extension of their nurturing roles as wives and mothers. The education provided to the freedmen had to address their basic need to read and write, and ultimately facilitate their transition to full participatory American citizenship. Lack of reading and writing skills limited their ability to become fully participatory members of American society, a society that grappled with black American's humanity and their entitlement to citizenship rights. During its early years Bennett College sought to provide their black women students with opportunities to develop these necessary skills.

Slowe's research called for black women's education and the institutions that served them to address several needs due to changes in American society. Institutions should "account for present status and new opportunities;" prepare them to make "contributions to solving world problems," and "become civic minded." In her view the classical curriculum should include "social science courses" as a supplement to the curriculum and develop in students a sense of "self-direction and responsibility." Cuthbert believed that black women's education should prepare them to "accept [the] full implication of leadership assigned" by virtue of her gender and race. She also argued black women should engage in "interracial work to teach whites and negroes;" be concerned about the "growth and betterment of Negro women's status;" and work to "free the Negro group itself from stereotyped thinking ... as well as the white world from stereotypes of the Negro, ... particularly of the Negro woman." Black women should also be "concerned for Negro men and the special social and psychological problems confronting them."¹²

¹² Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," 352-358. Marion Vera Cuthbert, *Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate*, (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia

By examining the work of Bennett College and the actions of its administration and students over the thirty-year period we see Bennett addressing the concerns expressed by Slowe, and Cuthbert in the following ways. Bennett's revision of the curricula, to better meet students needs as they left college and pursued careers other than teaching, is one way they prepared students to live lives that were within the confines of their "present status," yet striving for, or toward, "new opportunities" that became available to women during the early twentieth century. This was evident in the breadth of their annual Home Making Institutes (HMIs), specifically the 1946 and 1949 HMIs, which had as themes "Opening Doorways to Economic Opportunities" and "Today's Woman: Homemaker and Careerist." The 1946 HMI brought Black businesswomen to campus to present information to students and the community on running a business. The 1949 HMI addressed the question of whether being a homemaker or career woman was of utmost importance. The question was chosen because HMI coordinators believed it to be critical for young Black college women in the post-war environment, even though the concept of being a working woman, wife, and perhaps a mother was not foreign to Black women at the time. Further, Slowe argued that Black women's education must "prepare them for making contributions to solving world problems." Bennett's efforts to address this issue were evident in the ways students used their voice to raise concerns about social issues across the decades. Their views and opinions were ever-present in the student newspaper, the *Bennett Banner*. Issues about which Bennett's students spoke or wrote included: peacetime conscription, war, politics, healthcare and sanitary conditions for local residents, and women's role and place in American society. They raised issues related to childcare, community health, and exposure to the arts for students and the Greensboro community.

University, 1942), 116-120. Jeanne Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*, (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1955), 136-141.

Bennett addressed and prepared women for the independence that resulted from new production methods inherent in industrializing and urbanizing communities. These changes, women's participation in the workforce in large numbers, increased production, and changes in the way people worked offered women independence as they earned their own income and became self-supporting. Here also, the college's decision to revise the curriculum mirrors Slowe's belief in preparing women for the world in which they would live. Bennett's curriculum was revised to ensure that it met the needs of its students, offering academic coursework, fieldwork opportunities, and co-curricular activities that supported students' ability to take advantage of new opportunities opening to women.¹³

Bennett encouraged its students and Greensboro community members through HMIs in the 1940s and 1950s. Topics covered included "Opening Doorways to Economic Security" in 1946,¹⁴ "Achieving Peace through Creative Experiences" in 1953, "Education for Social Change" in 1955, "Achieving Self-Fulfillment Through Understanding" in 1957, and "Achieving Happiness through Creative Experience" in 1958. The themes represented a turn from prior HMIs, which had focused on issues

¹³Lucy D. Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1933): 356.

¹⁴"Eighth Home-Making Institute Week," *Bennett Banner*, May 1934, 6. "The Eleventh Annual Home-Making Institute Week," Box 25, Folder 3: Bennett College 1927-1943, Phelps-Stokes Fund Records, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. "Home-Making Institute is Held," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1939, 1. "Echoes from Home-Making Institute," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1942, 1. "Home Making Institute Held At Bennett," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1944, 1. "Home-Making Institute Brings Mrs. Roosevelt to Campus," *The Bennett Banner*, February 1945, 1. "Business Women Tell Of Unusual Careers," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1946, 3. "What is Happening to the American Family? Twenty-First Annual Homemaking Institute," Box 11, Folder: Bennett College Presentations (1946-1948), David Dallas Jones Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives. "Home-Making Institute '49 Features Career and Home," *BB* March 1949, 1. "Peace to be Theme of Homemaking Institute," *Bennett Banner*, February 1953, 1. "Twenty-Ninth Homemaking Institute Convenes," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1955, 1. "Thirty-First Home-Making Institute," *Bennett Banner*, April 1957, 1. "Creativity Stressed at Homemaking Institute," *Bennett Banner*, March 1958, 4. "Thirty-Fourth Annual Homemaking Institute," Box 10, Folder: Homemaking Institute, Willa B. Player Presidential Papers, Bennett College Archives.

directly related to women's roles or spheres – such as “The Home and the New Deal” in 1934, “The Home and the Civilian Defense” in 1942, “Child Development and Parent Education” in 1939, “The Negro Family in the Post War World” in 1944, “The Returning Soldier and His Problems” in 1945, and “What Is Happening to the American Family” in 1947, all issues that fell squarely within women's sphere. Themes during the 1950s focused attention on the social shift seen during the post war years. They were issues each person, particularly women, could pursue in fulfillment of their own interests and life goals.

Both Slowe and Cuthbert called for Black women's education to instill in them a sense of civic responsibility. Bennett's students' first evidence of civic responsibility was their 1938 movie theater boycott. Specifically, they stood against local movie theatre owners' decision to show movies in which Black citizens were depicted in degrading roles that White Americans were most comfortable viewing. North and South Carolina's White theater owners and moviegoers were unable and unwilling to view Black actors in any way, on screen, other than as subservient and docile; or in other words, in their proper role and place. The film industry, from the Belles' perspective, was complicit in inciting and perpetuating “popular myths that equated black males as rapists” and “equally negative representations of black women's sexuality.”¹⁵

Additionally, the students' protests of peacetime conscription, their support of the ballot for America's servicemen, and their participation in the 1939 Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina Conference, which addressed issues concerning rural communities, are further evidence of their civic engagement. Throughout this period, Bennett's students consistently pushed for Greensboro citizens to vote. Voting was viewed as a responsibility of all citizens despite the fact that North Carolina's government insisted, as

¹⁵Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 189.

did many Southern states, on curtailing Black voters' access to the franchise. The College, through its summer institutes, community health programs, Nursery School, Art School, Health Camp, and Health School sought ways to meet the needs of the Greensboro community. In doing so, whether it was hands-on technical experience, or the use of their planning, coordination, and execution skills, Bennett students were taught effective ways to be of service to their community in areas of their own interest. The enduring example of Bennett's civic engagement was the college's annual Home Making Institutes (HMI), started in 1927 and continuing through 1967. The HMIs were open to community participants and brought local, national, and world leaders to the campus and community to discuss issues of relevance to local, state, and national audiences.¹⁶

Slowe's belief in the inclusion of social science courses to supplement the classical curriculum led to her insistence that the inclusion of courses in Economics, Political Science, Sociology, and Psychology in the curriculum was key to preparing students for living in a modern world. Bennett's curriculum revision yielded an increase of 160 courses during this 30-year period. Increases were noted in the following departments: Humanities, Biological and Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Home Economics. Each offered new career paths and opportunities for Black women. Bennett ensured that its students were given ample opportunity for developing self-direction and responsibility through their engagement with the college's co-curricular program, which aimed to train "young women for life in democracy." The Student Senate provided an opportunity for self-direction; this fact makes Bennett one of the few schools that provided its Black women students this type of opportunity. Slowe's research shows that only 22 of the 44 responding colleges did this. Student engagement in co-curricular activities that impacted the life of Greensboro community members helped the Belles overcome what Slowe

¹⁶Louis Guenveur Street, *Home Economics 1980: A Golden Anniversary* (Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College, 1980), 1, North Carolina Collection, Colleges and Universities - Bennett College, Greensboro Public Library.

called a “psychology of inaction,” breaking free of the conformity instilled in them through religious indoctrination received in their home communities.¹⁷

Cuthbert’s dissertation findings called for college-educated Black women to accept their role in leadership of the race, engage in interracial work to educate Whites and Blacks in an evolving American society, be actively concerned about the “growth and betterment of Negro women,” work to eradicate stereotyped thinking about the “Negro generally and Negro women particularly,” and express concern for the “social and psychological problems of black men.” Assessing Bennett College’s efforts against Cuthbert’s findings, we see that Bennett College students’ work in health programs engaged their students in working with members of both races – specifically, the health programs aimed at schools and communities, such as the Health School, Health Camp, Community Health Education Program, and the Summer Teacher Training Program. Bennett was one of four colleges selected to collaborate with the State of North Carolina’s Health Department and three public institutions to run workshops for health educators during the 1940s.¹⁸

Efforts to “free black and white citizens from stereotyped thinking about the Negro generally and negro women particularly” can be seen in Bennett’s open campus policy. As a private institution, Bennett was free to host interracial events. The college frequently hosted interracial conferences, as it was one of the few places in Greensboro that was able to openly do so. Several conferences of the Methodist Church, YWCA, the Conference of Southern Students, the Methodist Student Movement, and the North Carolina Methodist Student Movement took advantage of this opportunity. This was characteristic of their collaboration with peer institutions and organizations in the

¹⁷Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” 357.

¹⁸Cuthbert, “Education and Marginality,” 116-120.

Piedmont triad area on conferences and training; as well Bennett's willingness to host political figures, businessmen, and exchange students of all races.¹⁹

When Bennett's students attended off-campus events and conferences, their very presence, reasoned arguments, and presentations debunked stereotypes that too often caricatured and denigrated Black citizens. Because women's primary role was as caretakers of the home, it by extension made them "caretaker[s] of the race"; therefore, by default, Black women were empowered to speak for the race. Bennett College students were advised via the *Handbook of Bennett College*, *The Bennett Blue Book*, *Bennett College Blue Book: A Handbook for New Students at Bennett College*, and *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures* of the behavior expectation that was the standard to which Bennett students would be held. Despite these strictures, the institution encouraged students to voice their opinions on all issues of concern.²⁰

In addition to general health concerns and sanitary projects during the 1940s, Bennett's students engaged in work to improve the Black community as a whole, and they vociferously advocated for the rights of Black war veterans. Specifically, they advocated for their right to vote while enlisted and fighting overseas by supporting the passage of the Soldier Vote Bill of 1942 and the Green-Lucas-Worley Bill. Additionally, they expressed concern for veterans' work options upon return to the States from active

¹⁹Ibid., 116-120.

²⁰Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 202. Literature provided to Bennett's students regarding college policy and procedures include: *Handbook of Bennett College, 1936-1937*, *Handbook of Bennett College, 1938-1939-1940*, *Handbook of Bennett College, 1941-1942-1943*, *The Bennett Blue Book, 1944-1945-1946*, *Bennett College Blue Book: A Handbook for new Students at Bennett College 1951-1952*, *Bennett College Blue Book: A Handbook for new Students at Bennett College 1956-1957*, *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1959*, *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1960*, *The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1962*.

military service, as well as their access to housing, education, and business loan opportunities.²¹

Bennett College and its students challenged many of the gender and social roles, and norms expected of Black college-educated women during the early twentieth century. HBCUs were expected to “raise an army of teachers and preachers ... to guide the race out of their hundreds of years of political captivity, forced illiteracy and ... moral degradation.”²² Bennett did this by breaking the mold for the traditional model of Black womanhood. Many of the college’s rules encouraged Black citizens to conform to the behavior and norms of mainstream America society to show that Black citizens were similar to White Americans and worthy of respect. They then, once shown to be respectable, were able to advance an agenda that worked to dismantle the segregation, discrimination, and Jim Crow laws that hindered Black Americans’ full access to, and exercise of, their citizenship rights – rights that by the mid-twentieth century had been denied them for nearly a century. The College showed, through its students and alumni, that Black college-educated women were intellectually capable of problem solving, cooperating, and competing with White citizens. They also proved that a college education does not necessarily drive a wedge between the educated and the uneducated; that Black women could be educated for self-fulfillment; and that they were capable of moderating their own behavior without the imposition of excessive, restrictive rules.

Part of Bennett College’s mission was to ensure that its students and alumnae knew they had a place and voice in American society by virtue of their citizenship. The college strove to ensure that the education provided to its students offered them numerous opportunities to voice their opinion through traditional campus activities, off-campus

²¹Cassandra Moore, “The Soldier Vote Bill Becomes a Great Game of Politics,” *The Bennett Banner*, February 1944, 1.

²²Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 13.

volunteer work, fundraising and service opportunities, as well as through interactions with external partners. The college's emphasis was on preparing its students and graduates for careers other than teaching, homemaking, and domestic work, as well as focusing on revising the curriculum and developing a co-curricular program that taught students useful skills. This shows Bennett's commitment to preparing students to take on leadership roles once they completed their studies at the college. The Jones and Player team understood that a solid curriculum, paired with a thoughtfully composed and administered co-curricular program, empowered and inspired students and would encourage them to become leaders once they departed from the campus, adding their voices to those seeking a solution to the world's problems.²³

When this topic found me in 2003, it captured my imagination because there was little written about HBCUs and their contributions to American history. Additionally, there was little discussion about the role women played in protest and activism during the Civil Rights Movement, and I had little knowledge of student protest and activism prior to or during the modern CRM. As I researched to understand the history of Bennett College, its leadership, and its students' involvement, I gained a more complete understanding of the institution, its history, its place in higher education and American history, and how its leadership intentionally educated students to be participatory citizens who would eventually plan, execute, and sustain protests during Greensboro's desegregation movement in the 1960s. My attempt to understand the college and its students' activities revealed Bennett's earlier activism. I was surprised that very little was known or published about their early activism, which began shortly after Bennett College was reorganized as a college for women.

This dissertation contributes to higher education literature in four areas: women's higher education, Black higher education (HBCUs), Black women's higher education,

²³"Facing the Challenge," *The Bennett Banner*, May 1958, 2.

and the role students at HBCUs played in student-led protest and activism prior to the modern Civil Rights Movement. It contributes to literature on women's education by inserting the experiences of Black college women into an existing literature where sparse attention has been paid to their experience at Predominantly White Institutions, coeducational and single-sex; and it provides information on their higher education experience at one of the two HBCUs whose mission was, and remains, the higher education of Black women. Specifically, it addresses the work of Bennett College, drawing a connection between its reorganization, curriculum revision, and its students' participation in protest and activism during the early twentieth century.

It also contributes to understanding Black women's higher education experience by showing that Bennett College, early in its institutional life, intentionally set out to prepare Black women for their place in the social order, a social order that was not linked to their past status as property or the subservient service roles they were expected to fill. Bennett College prepared its students for participatory citizenship so that they were ready to make contributions to solving the problems of the world. The example of Bennett College reveals that its academic curriculum, as well as its co-curricular program, was designed to promote social justice, a path pursued from the time of its reorganization in 1926.

Additionally, this research contributes to literature on HBCUs by providing an objective analysis and interpretation of the actions taken by Bennett College to educate Black women in a region of this country that devalued their existence and saw their role and place in American society solely as subservient. This research project shows that Bennett College was visionary in executing the college's mission because it sought to educate and prepare students for the lives they would live once the barriers of segregation and discrimination were removed. In the interim, Bennett College provided its students with the tools and skills they needed to be resourceful, develop strategy, make plans, and ultimately take action to effect social change in America. Last, and perhaps most

important, this research helps to dispel the dominant narrative that all HBCUs were politically repressive and socially conservative.²⁴

Finally, this work also contributes to literature on student protest and activism by focusing on the period immediately preceding the modern Civil Rights Movement, when the ideological foundation for the events of 1950s and 1960s was laid. This research helps students and researchers understand the reasons why events of the modern Civil Rights Movement occurred in rapid succession after the Supreme Court's rendering of their decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and *Brown II* in 1955. This project also notes the significant role and contributions of Black college students – specifically Black women, who were not viewed as initiators or active participants in protest activity – in securing the rights of America's Black citizens.

Black women college students during the early twentieth century raised their voices to discuss issues related to war, poverty, the economy, and politics. Bennett's students attended religious, interracial, national and local conferences exchanging ideas with fellow college students, and with local, national, and international leaders in government, business, and education. Bennett's students actively engaged with the Greensboro community during the 1940s and 1950s to provide and encourage voter registration and participation in elections, and advocate for improved housing, living conditions, and public works; they also worked to alleviate healthcare disparities and hosted institutes, all activities that represent some form of activism. Students also engaged in fieldwork, took part in a government course to prepare for national defense, and debated and discussed the meaning of democracy, World War II and the Cold War,

²⁴Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White*, 2, 6.

education policy, women's career opportunities, race, their contribution to national defense, peacetime conscription, and adoption of the United Nations Charter.²⁵

Their actions challenged notions that women's place was in the home; that Black women's role and place were subservient; that their career aspirations should go no higher than being a teacher or engaging in domestic work. The expression of their opinions in *The Bennett Banner* and at conferences debunked the notion of Black women's intellectual inferiority, and their assumed inability to comport and govern themselves. This research also reveals the unique nature of campus life for Black women at Bennett College, showing that not every single-sex HBCU advocated education for traditional women's roles or career options. In the case of Bennett College, its leadership saw the need to equip Black women to survive in the world as it existed at the time, in Depression Era America where Jim Crow, disfranchisement, and the threat of lynching framed the lives Black Americans could live. The college provided students with skills, knowledge, and experiences that lent themselves to occupations other than teaching and domestic work. The lesson in the example of Bennett College is that some higher education institutions were bold and brave enough to take a stand on issues affecting their student populations.

Just as the roles and places of women were shifting in America, so was the role and place of Black women as they entered the workforce in larger numbers after World War I and during World War II. The country changed, and women could no longer be expected to remain the "stable unchanging element in a changing world."²⁶

²⁵"Conference of Southern Students To Send Two Delegates to San Francisco Conference," *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 1. Betty L. Powers, "Decisions Reached at San Francisco Can Have Far Reaching Effects" *The Bennett Banner*, April 1945, 1. Willa B. Player, "Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project" (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948), 131-132.

²⁶Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii.

My research on Bennett College contributes new knowledge to the study of higher education history. The Bennett College campus was a microcosm of what the college envisioned America could become. As much as Bennett College changed Greensboro and North Carolina through its activism and community education institutes, programs, and seminars, those who came to the campus to speak changed the college and its students by sharing their knowledge and expertise and emboldening its students to raise their voices.

Future research related to Bennett College will include identification of the names of specific students, as well as research on their lives and career trajectories after graduation, to see what work they completed and what benefits society reaped from their Bennett College experience. A three-volume book written by Juanita Patience Moss (BC '54), *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett*, already exists. It compiles some of this information along with reminiscences from the Belles about the College.²⁷ Additional inquiry will be made into their protest and activism throughout the 1960s and 1970s, since college students were an integral part of the CRM and Vietnam War protests.

Bennett's leadership team appears to have been part of a network of professionals from the religious, government, education, and business fields, and those in the philanthropic community. An examination should be made to determine how the college established and cultivated ties and networks, given its ability to attract speakers to campus from these fields to participate in vesper services and the annual Home Making Institute (HMI).

Bennett also had a strong network among HBCUs. Since faculty frequently moved among the colleges, understanding what resources they shared, if any, will be helpful in understanding how HBCUs networked among themselves and with the broader higher

²⁷Juanita Patience Moss, *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles Class of 1924-2012* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2010). Juanita Patience Moss, *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles, Volume II* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2012). Juanita Patience Moss, *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belle, Volume III* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2016).

education community. The college's annual catalogs and *The Bennett Banner* published the names of speakers and performers who visited campus for vespers services and talks. Knowing who these people were, the organizations they were part of, and their connection to the college will reveal the types of relationships Bennett built and sustained with the higher education community.

At the time Jones accepted the Bennett College presidency, it was reported that philanthropic funding for "missionary schools and colleges for colored people in the South," had come to an end.²⁸ Bennett College received financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), the Phelps Stokes Fund (PSF), the General Education Board (GEB), the Ford Foundation, and the Rosenwald Fund. Understanding the ways Bennett was able to access foundation and philanthropic support and sustain these relationships and networks during this time period will provide insight into the college's strategic partnerships. It also offers an opportunity to assess whether this support and funding was used to shape and determine Bennett's academic and social justice agenda, or if funding was limited because of the Bennett's social justice agenda.

A book has been written on Player's years as president of Bennett College. It describes her leadership, the campus environment, and students' engagement in protest and activism during the Civil Rights Movement. However, to date I have not located a biography on either Player or her predecessor, David Dallas Jones. He, Player, Slowe, Cuthbert, and Noble are alumni of Teachers College. These five higher education administrators and faculty members are examples of the role Teachers College played in providing graduate education To black men and women, some of whom became higher education leaders and returned to the South to work at HBCUs. Their lives and career

²⁸Thomas Jesse Jones, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1916, No. 38, *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Education Schools for Colored People in the United States*, Volume II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), 413.

experiences, as well those of others not associated with Bennett College, warrant study to learn the effects of their education on the institutions and students they served.²⁹

Bennett's annual Home Making Institute ran for nearly forty years. While completing research for this dissertation, I located some HMI documentation – reports, programs, and newspaper articles – that detail HMI themes, speeches and speakers, and topics. This is not enough to get a full understanding of all the issues the HMIs addressed, and the contribution this community resource provided to Greensboro, North Carolina, HBCUs, and government officials during the Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement. Recovering this information would lead to a fuller understanding of its focus and impact and the changes over time, as well as whether similar institutes were conducted by other HBCUs.

Finally, there should be an examination of the role of the college's trustees during this period to determine whether they supported or opposed Bennett's students' participation in protest and activism. By 1960, under Frederick Patterson's leadership, the Board supported its students' efforts in the sit-in movement. Following the February 1960 Greensboro sit-ins, and just months before the 1960 HMI, Patterson stated, "Segregation on the basis of race ... is morally wrong." While he expressed regret that the students' protest activity "disturb[ed] the peace and tranquility of a community," he believed the issue needed to be addressed and that "there should be no turning back until the issue has been successfully resolved." His sentiments are similar to those expressed by Player on the occasion of her inauguration in 1956: "At this point, there can be no standing still, no compromise, no equivocation."³⁰

²⁹Linda Beatrice Brown's (BC '61) *The Long Walk: The Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College*. Margaret Smith Crocco and Cally L. Waite, "Education and Marginality: Race and Gender in Higher Education, 1940-1955," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 69-91.

³⁰"The Inauguration: New Vistas," *Bennett College Bulletin*, Vol. 24, No. 4, November 1956, 6. The theme for the 1960 HMI was "Register and Vote!: A Necessity for Good Citizenship." "Sitdowns Are

Held Inevitable: Ex-College Head Talks at Bennett,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 15, 1960, B-1.
Brown, *The Long Walk*, 169.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahearn, Lorraine. "When Hollywood Crossed the Color Line: Jim Crow Movie Censors and Black Audience Resistance in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1937-1938." In *African Americans in the History of Mass Communication*. Edited by Naeemah Clark. New York: Peter Lang, 2014.
- Altbach, Phillip G. *Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States: A Selected Bibliography*. St. Louis, Mo.: United Ministries in Higher Education; Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1968.
- Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Arnett, Ethel Stephens. *Greensboro North Carolina: The Seat of Guilford County*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955.
- Black Women Oral History Project. *Interview with Susie Jones*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1977.
- Board of Education Methodist Episcopal Church. *Survey Report of Colleges for Negroes*. Methodist Episcopal Church, 1932.
- Boren, Mark Edelman. *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Brawley, James P. *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage Freedom and Education of Black People*. New York: Vantage Press, 1974.
- Brinkley, Alan. *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of The American People*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000.
- Brinton, Crane. *The Anatomy of Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.
- Brown, Linda Beatrice. *The Long Walk: The Story of the Presidency of Willa B. Player at Bennett College*. Danville, Va.: Bennett College women's Leadership Institute, 1998.
- _____. *Belles of Liberty: Gender, Bennett College, and the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, North Carolina*. Greensboro, N.C.: Women and Wisdom Press, 2013.
- Cahan, Emily D. *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1965*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, 1989.

- Chafe, William H. *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- _____. *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- _____. *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Cohen, Robert. *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Cohen, Robert and David J. Snyder. *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Covington, Howard E. *Once Upon a City: Greensboro, North Carolina's Second Century*. Greensboro, N.C.: Greensboro Historical Museum, Inc., 2008.
- Crow, Jeffrey J., Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley. *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*. Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002.
- DeGroot, Gerald J. *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*. New York: Longman, 1998.
- Drewry, Henry N. and Humphrey Doermann. *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Dillard, James Hardy, Thomas Jesse Jones, Charles Templeman Lorman, Joseph Houldsworth Oldham, Anson Phelps Stokes, and Monroe Work. *Twenty-Year Report of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922-1931*. New York: Phelps Stokes Fund, 1932.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*. Boston: Perennial, 2000.
- Elliott, Mark. *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgee and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Foner, Eric. *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, Fourth Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.
- Foster, Julian and Durward Long (Editors). *Protest!: Student Activism in America*. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1970.
- Gault, Charlayne Hunter. *In My Place*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

- Gavins, Raymond. A "Sin of Omission: Black Historiography in North Carolina," in *Black Americans in North Carolina and the South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984.
- Gilmore, Glenda, E. *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- _____. "Responding to the Challenges of the Progressive Era." In *Who Were the Progressives?* Boston: Bedford, St. Martin's, 2002.
- _____. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.
- Gordon, Lynn D. *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Graham, Francis D. and Susan L. Poulson. "Spelman College," in *Challenged by Coeducation: Women's Colleges Since the 1960s*, Leslie Miller Mernal and Susan L. Poulson, Editors. Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Hine, Darlene Clark. *Speak Truth to Power: Black Professional Class in United States History*. New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc.
- Hine, Darlene Clark and Kathleen Thompson. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*. New York: Broadway Books, 1998.
- Ingram, O. Kelly. *Methodism Alive in North Carolina*. Durham, N.C.: The Divinity School of Duke University, 1976.
- Jerome, V. J. "The Negro in Hollywood Films." New York: Masses & Mainstream, 1952.
- Johnson, Daniel M. and Rex R. Campbell. *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1981.
- Johnson, Kimberley. *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age before Brown*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Jones, Thomas Jesse. *Educational Adaptations: Report of Ten Years' Work of the Phelps Stokes Fund, 1910-1920*. New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1920.

- Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*. New York: Liveright Pub. Corp., 2013.
- Kenniston, Kenneth. "The Sources of Student Dissent," in *Black Power and Student Rebellion*, edited by James McEvoy and Abraham Miller. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1969.
- Key, V. O., Jr. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Vintage Books, 1949.
- Larkins, John Rodman. *The Negro Population of North Carolina: Social and Economic*. Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944.
- Lefever, Harry G. *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005.
- Ling, Peter J. and Sharon Monteith (Eds.). *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
- Lucas, Christopher J. *American Higher Education: A History*, Second Edition. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Manley, Albert E. *A Legacy Continues: The Manley Years at Spelman College, 1953-1976*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995.
- Matthews, Donald and James Prothro. "Negro Students and the Protest Movement," in *Black Power and Student Rebellion*, edited by James McEvoy and Abraham Miller. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. 1969.
- Mays, Benjamin. *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971.
- McCandless, Amy Thompson. *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999.
- Meier, August, Elliott Rudwick and Francis L. Broderick (Eds.). *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Second Edition). New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965.
- Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. New York: Dell, 1976.
- Morgan, Iwan and Philip Davies. *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012.
- Moss, Juanita Patience. *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles Class of 1924 -2012*. Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2010.

- _____. *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles Volume II*. Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2012.
- _____. *Tell Me Why Dear Bennett: Memoirs of Bennett College Belles Volume III*. Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2016.
- Motley, Constance Baker. *Equal Justice Under the Law: An Autobiography of Constance Baker Motley*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.
- National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education. *To Give the Key of knowledge: United Methodists and Education, 1794-1976*. Nashville, Tenn.: National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education, 1976.
- Noble, Jeanne. *The Higher Education of Black Women in Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe, Editors. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988.
- Olson, Lynne. *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830-1970*. New York: Scribner, 2001.
- Oppenheimer, Martin. *The Sit-In Movement of 1960*. New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1989.
- Perkins, Linda M. "The Education of Black Women in the Nineteenth Century" in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe, Editors. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988.
- Pfaff, Eugene E. *Keep on Walkin', Keep on Talkin': An Oral History of the Greensboro Civil Rights Movement*. Greensboro, N.C.: Tudor Publishers, 2012.
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Rogers, Ibram. *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- Sampson, Edward E. and Harold A Korn (Editors). *Student Protest and Activism: Alternatives for Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970.
- Sewell, George Alexander and Margaret L. Dwight. *Mississippi Black History Makers*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012.
- Shaw, Stephanie J. *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

- Sitkoff, Harvard. *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue Volume I: The Depression Decade*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Solomon, Barbara Miller. *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Sternsher, Bernard. (Editor). *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969.
- Stokes, Anson Phelps. *Negro Status and Race Relations in the United States, 1911-1946: The Thirty-Five Year Report of the Phelps Stokes Fund*. New York, 1948.
- Tourgee, Albion W. *A Fool's Errand, By One of the Fools*. New York: Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1880.
- Watson, Yolanda L. and Sheila T. Gregory. *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman Presidents*. Sterling: Stylus, 2005.
- White, Deborah Gray. *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.
- Wolcott, Victoria W. *Race, Riots and Roller Coasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
- Wolff, Miles. *Lunch at the 5 & 10*. Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1990.
- Wolters, Raymond. *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970.
- _____. *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975.
- Wood, James L. *Political Consciousness and Student Activism*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1974.
- _____. *The Sources of American Student Activism*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974.
- Woodson, Carter G. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. New York: AMS Press, 1933.
- Woody, Thomas. *A History of Women's Education in the United States*. New York: Octagon Books, 1929.
- Zaki, Hoda M. *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute: The Legacy of Alonzo G. Moron*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Zinn, Howard. *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

Journal Articles

- Bell-Scott, Patricia. "Black Women's Higher Education: Our Legacy." *Sage Magazine* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 8-11.
- "Bennett College: 'Vassar of South' Rated by Educator as finest Negro Girl's College in Country." *Ebony* 6, no. 3 (January 1951): 64-68.
- Collier-Thomas, Bettye. "The Impact of Black Women in Education: An Historical Overview." *Journal of Negro Education* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 173-180.
- Crocco, Margaret Smith and Cally L. Waite. "Education and Marginality: Race and Gender in Higher Education, 1940-1955." *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 69-91.
- "David Dallas Jones." *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (Apr. 1956): 179-181.
- Dowd Hall, Jacquelyn. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (Mar., 2005): 1233-1263.
- Dudziak, Mary L. "Brown as Cold War Case." *The Journal of American History* 91, No. 1 (June, 2004): 32-42.
- Guitar, Mary Anne, "Bennett's Proper Pickets: Negro College Girls Must be Tough Fighters on the Picket Line, Young Ladies at Home." *Mademoiselle Magazine* 61, no. 6 (June 1965): 112-115.
- Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. "Black Women and Higher Education: Spelman and Bennett Colleges Revisited." *Journal of Negro Education* 51, no. 3 (1982): 278-287.
- Harris, Paisley. "Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women's History and Black Feminism." *The Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 212-238.
- Marteena, Constance. "A College for Girls," *Opportunity Journal of Negro Life* 41, no. 10 (October 1938): 306-307.
- Perkins, Linda M. "The Impact of The 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women." *Journal of Social Issues* 39, no. 3 (1982): 17-28.
- Perkins, Linda M. "Lucy Diggs Slowe: Champion of the Self-Determination of African American Women in Higher Education." *The Journal of Negro History* 81, no. 1 (Winter-Autumn, 1996): 89-104.
- Seller, Maxine Schwartz. "A History of Women's Education in the United States: Thomas Woody's Classic, Sixty Years Later." *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring, 1989): 95-107.

Slowe, Lucy D. "Higher Education of Negro Women." *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1933): 352-358.

_____. "The Colored Girl Enters College," *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 15, no. 9 (September 1937): 276-279.

Taylor, Lois. "Social Action at Bennett College." *Opportunity Journal of Negro Life* 20, no. 1. (January 1942): 8-10.

Unpublished Theses and Dissertations

Alford, James. *For Alma Mater: Fighting for Change at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2014 from <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/1364612106/fulltextPDF/6E89FB902C3E4145PQ/1?accountid=14258>

Cuthbert, Marion Vera. *Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate*. Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1942.

Graham, Francis Denise. *The Founding of an All Black Female Seminary: Spelman 1881-1927*. Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne, 1996. Accessed November 18, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/304305965/fulltextPDF/C981305485A14A21PQ/1?accountid=14258>

Holmes, Dwight Oliver Wendell. *The Evolution of the Negro College*. Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934.

Isaacs, Barbara R. I. *The Lunch Counter Struggle, 1960-1963: Women Remapping Boundaries of Race, Gender and Vocation.* Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2002.

Lockwood, Nadine Sherri. *Bennett College for Women, 1926-1966*. Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2004. Accessed April 15, 2016 from <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/305078824/previewPDF/36D0E09C90F4161PQ/1?accountid=14258>

Noble, Jeanne. *The Negro Woman's College Education*. Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1955.

Player, Willa B. *Improving College Education for Women at Bennett College: A Report of a Type A Project*. Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1948.

Richardson, Johnetta Gladys. *The Southern Negro Youth Congress: A History*. Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1987. Accessed June 2, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com.eduproxy.tc-library.org:8080/pqdtglobal/docview/304894867/fulltextPDF/DBDDA684032F4F43PQ/2?accountid=14258>.

Sutton, Virginia Ann. *The Early History of Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina*. Masters thesis, Wake Forest University, 1969.

Government Documents

Klein, Arthur J. Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1928, No. 7. Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1929.

The Home Demonstration Agent. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Miscellaneous Publication No. 602. April 1946.

Jones, Thomas Jesse. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1916, No. 38. Negro Education A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States, Volume I. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917.

_____. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1916, No. 38. Negro Education A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States, Volume II. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917.

Digital Sources

The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Forty-Fifth Annual Report For the Year 1925 – 1926. 78-79. The Woman's Home Mission Society, Methodist Episcopal Church 420 Plum Street Cincinnati, OH Accessed 12.25.14 from <https://archive.org/stream/womanshomemissio1926woma#page/78/mode/2up/search/bennett+seminary>

Bennett College Publications

Bennett College Catalogue and Circular of Information. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1920.

Bennett College for Women Circular of Information. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1926.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women. Greensboro. N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1927.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1928-1929. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1928.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalogue Number 1929-1930. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1929.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1931.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1932.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women, Catalog Number 1933-1934. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1934.

Bennett College Bulletin Catalogue 1936-1937. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1936.

Bulletin of Bennett College for Women. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1937.

Bennett College Bulletin 1938-1939. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1938.

Bennett College Bulletin, Catalogue Number 1938-1939. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1938.

Bennett College Bulletin: General Information. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1947.

Bennett College Bulletin: The Instructional Program. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1946.

“Bennett College: Summer Institute for Home Defense, June 2 – July 15, 1942.” Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1942.

“Summer Session on Community Problems, Child Health Education Workshop.” Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1943.

“A Statement of the Philosophy of Bennett College Prepared for the Faculty Fall Conference by Willa B. Player September 1946.” Bennett College Bulletin. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1948.

Bennett College Bulletin. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1950.

“President Jones Retired; Dr. Player Succeeds Him,” Bennett College Bulletin. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1955.

Bennett College Bulletin. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1956.

Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Issues 1958-1960. Procedures. Greensboro, N.C.:
Bennett College for Women, 1959.

The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures. Greensboro, N.C.:
Bennett College for Women, 1959.

The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures. Greensboro, N.C.:
Bennett College for Women, 1960.

Bennett College Bulletin Catalog Supplement 1960-1961 27 Procedures. Greensboro,
N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1960.

“The Thirty-Fourth Annual Home-Making Institute, Bennett College; Theme: Register
and Vote! A Necessity for Good Citizenship.” Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College
for Women, 1960.

The Art of Living at Bennett College: Standards and Procedures. Greensboro, N.C.:
Bennett College for Women, 1962.

Bennett College Bulletin. Greensboro, N.C.: Bennett College for Women, 1963.

Streat, Louise Guenveur. Home Economics 1980: A Golden Anniversary. Greensboro:
Bennett College, 1980.

Archives

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
Phelps Stokes Fund Records

Bennett College Archives
The Bennett Banner
Bulletin of Bennett College
Bennett College Bulletin
Bennett College Circular of Information
David Dallas Jones Papers
Willa B. Player Presidential Papers

Greensboro Public Library
North Carolina Collection

North Carolina Digital Heritage Center - www.digitalnc.org
The Bennett Banner
The Carolina Times

Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library
The Black Women Oral History Project
United Negro College Fund Oral History Project

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
Joseph P. Lash Papers

New York University
James Jackson and Ester Cooper Jackson Papers

The Rockefeller Archive Center
General Education Board
Ford Foundation Records

Appendix A

Abbreviations

AAC	Association of American Colleges
AACR	American Association of Collegiate Registrars
AAUW	American Association of University Women
AN	Amsterdam News
ASU	American Student Union
BB	The Bennett Banner
BC	Bennett College for Women
BOE	Board of Education
BRFAL	Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
CT	The Carolina Times
FAS	Freedmen's Aid Society
GEB	General Education Board
GDN	Greensboro Daily News
GDR	Greensboro Daily Record
GPL	Greensboro Public Library
HBCUs	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HMI	Home Making Institute
LBSM	Long Black Student Movement
LCRM	Long Civil Rights Movement
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
MSM	Methodist Student Movement
MWHMS	Methodist Women's Home Mission Society
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCA&T	North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College
NNC	National Negro Congress
NNCM	New Negro College Movement
NYA	National Youth Administration
PWI	Predominantly White Institution
RAC	Rockefeller Archives Center
RBML	Rare Book and Manuscripts Library
SACS	Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
SC	Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SNYC	Southern Negro Youth Conference
UNCF	United Negro College Fund
UNCG	University of North Carolina at Greensboro
UNC	University of North Carolina
WABHMS	Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society
WC	Woman's College
WPA	Works Progress Administration
WSP	The Winston Salem Post

YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Appendix B

Glossary

Activism – Activity in which people engage to change perceived injustice in society; advocacy.

American Student Union (ASU) – A national organization of college students founded in 1935 by the merger of Communist and Socialist student organizations that protested against militarism. Its mission was to mobilize students in support of “an extensive reform agenda.” ASU was associated with the American Youth congress (AYC); and its Communist dominated leadership caused a portion of the membership to split from the ASU in 1939; by 1941, the ASU ceased to exist.

Bennett Belle – Term used to describe the students and alumnae of Bennett College. The College’s use of the term could have its origin in the idea of the antebellum Southern Belle, or an extrapolation or interpretation of the bible verse inscribed on the bell given to Bennett Seminary by Lyman Bennett’s. The inscription reads: “Proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Black Cabinet – A group of “vocal and eloquent highly trained and politically astute African American intellectuals who spearheaded the struggle for civil rights during the 1930s.” Eleanor Roosevelt is said to be the guiding force behind its creation. “Members worked officially and unofficially in their agencies to provide insight into the needs of African Americans.

Black Education – Phrase used to denote the provision of education to blacks in America during the period under study. It is intended to encompass all phases of education – primary, secondary and higher education before the Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision.

Civil Rights Movement (CRM) – Period of time that encompassed acts of civil disobedience engaged in by citizens of many races and religions in the United States. Generally it is bounded by the years following the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision and the signing of the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

Co-Curricular Activities – Term used by Bennett College to signify the connection between the college’s curriculum and the activities offered to students outside the classroom. Activities outside the classroom were intended to support and amplify the college’s required course work and students were expected to put their studies into action.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) – Higher education institutions primarily located in the Southern United States. HBCUs have their origins are in the normal schools and seminaries founded after the Civil War to educate former slaves and their descendants. Some of these normal schools and seminaries developed into collegiate

institutions during the early twentieth century. Like PWIs, public and private HBCUs were created. Public HBCUs were the result of the Morrill Land Grant acts of 1862 and 1890.

Home Demonstrations Agents (HDA) – Home Demonstration agents served several purposes in the United States Department of Agriculture. Purposes included working with rural residents to provide information for democratic citizenship, manage their income to better care for the needs of their family, and to develop leadership among rural women and girls. In addition, HDAs worked to raise awareness of the need for medical facilities and improved health through nutrition, improving the condition of their housing, developing an appreciation of recreation activities, enabling rural residents to advocate on behalf of their communities and themselves.

Homemaking Institute (HMI) – Begun in 1927, Bennett College hosted an annual Homemaking Institute “to point up, in as dynamic a fashion as our resources would allow, the responsibility of a college to work realistically within the mainstream of home and community life.” Each year, the college brought a combination of government officials, educators and politicians to campus to address selected topical issues. It was last held in 1967.

Long Black Student Movement (LBSM) – A phrase coined by Ibram Rogers in *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconstruction of Higher Education 1965-1972*. The phrase is intended to connect activities engaged in by black students beginning after World War I in the New Negro College Movement (NNCM) of the 1920s and early 1930s. The LBSM focused increasingly on accruing off-campus civil rights from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s, and then ventured to black power, reaching its pinnacle in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the Black Campus Movement (BCM).

Long Civil Rights Movement (LCRM) – A phrase coined by historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall used to describe the activity that began in the late 1930s, during the New Deal Order. According to Hall, activity accelerated after World War II reaching outside the south through the 1960s and 1970s.

McCarthyism - The practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper evidence to support the accusation. Accusations are often accompanied by use of intrusive or unfair investigative techniques. Its goal was to restrict dissent or political criticism

Methodist Student Movement - The Methodist Student Movement had its origin in the Wesley Foundation campus ministries, founded by James Baker in 1913 at the University of Illinois. World War I and the Great Depression, created a need for a progressive and prophetic, ministry for college students during this period. Officially founded in 1938, the Methodist Student Movement was born in anticipation of the unification of the three largest American Methodist bodies in 1939; the merger gave Methodist college and seminary students a national platform to address concerns society. MSM was organized

geographically and promoted varied interests –race, war, peace, ecumenism, new theologies, and art. The Movement published a periodic magazine called *Motive*. By 1969, the Methodist Student Movement disbanded.

<http://catalog.gcuh.org/publicdata/gcuh4325.htm>

National Negro Congress (NNC) – Founded at Howard University in 1935 the NNC fought for black liberation. The NNC opposed war, fascism, and discrimination, particularly racial discrimination. During the Great Depression, the party worked in the United States to unite black and white workers and intellectuals in the fight for racial justice.

National Youth Administration (NYA) – New Deal Agency that focused on providing work and education for American youth between the ages of 16 and 25. NYA operated from 1935 – 1939; its operation was transferred within several federal offices – WPA, FSA (Federal Security Agency) and last under WMC (War Manpower Commission) – until it closed in 1943.

New Negro – Phrase used to describe the palpable change in consciousness among black Americans as noticeable beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century following World War I and during the Harlem Renaissance era. The Old Negro was southern, rural, agricultural, tied to the past and to a feudal order of white political control and racist stereotype. The “New Negro,” totally a result of a migration that had been occurring for the last 10 or so years before Locke wrote his essay, was northern, urban, industrial, freed from his past, more militant and assertive.

New Negro College Movement (NNCM) – College student movement that began after World War I and was concentrated in the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. It was characterized by black Americans’ greater awareness and acceptance of their historical roots. During this period, Ibram Rogers indicates, “Scholars and artists accelerated their striving in African American self-discovery, self-examination and self-inventiveness. African Americans downgraded political accommodation, cultural assimilation, and reverence of whiteness, allowing another ideology to rise in its place. The mood, then conviction, became encapsulated in two words: New Negro.”

Payne Fund – The Payne Fund is a charitable fund that grew out of the National committee for the Study of Juvenile Reading. The fund initially supported studies and experiments on children but later expanded to include medical education and interracial cooperation.

Political Consciousness – An awareness of public issues.

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) – Higher education institutions whose student body has historically been predominantly white and that may have, in the past, excluded black students from admission and enrollment based on their race.

Republican Motherhood – The notion that justified women’s need for education based on their role as mothers. It was believed that the Republic could only succeed if citizens

were educated. This role fell to women because they were the primary caretakers of American children; therefore it was necessary that women be educated so they could raise educated civic-minded children.

Southern Negro Youth Conference (SNYC) – Formed in Richmond, Virginia in 1937, this student organization concerned itself with issues of racial equality both on and off campus, staging strikes and boycotts, and establishing education and cultural programs. SNYC ceased operating in 1948.

United States National Student Association (USNSA) – An international student organization founded in 1946 by students from the United States and 37 other countries. Student organizations formed in the 1920s and 1930s, disbanded before the end of World War II, the USNSA was formed at the University of Wisconsin at Madison the following summer. It focused on campus concerns including strengthening student government, enhancing civil liberties on the American campuses, and expanding access to higher education. USNSA avoided political causes, but others contended that the membership had a right to address any problem that affected students and a responsibility to consider issues of national concern. It condemned “McCarthyism” in 1951 and South African Apartheid in 1953.

Works Progress Administration (WPA) – A New Deal agency that worked to eradicate the effects of the Great Depression by employing Americans, mostly men, in public construction projects. The Federal Project Number One employed artists – painters, musicians, writers, actors and directors in projects focused on art, drama and literacy.

Appendix C

Bennett College Home Making Institutes

Year	Number	Theme/Date
1934	8 th	The Home and the New Deal, May 6-12
1937	11 th	No theme given, April 25-30
1939	13 th	Child Development and Parent Education, February 20-26
1940	14 th	Consumer Education, February 14-25
1942	16 th	The Home and Civilian Defense: Victory Behind the Lines, March ³¹
1944	18 th	The Negro Family in the Post War World, Date not available
1945	19 th	The Returning Soldier and His Problems, March 18-24
1946	20 th	Opening Doorways to Economic Security, March 18-24
1947	21 st	What is Happening to the American Family?, April 20-25
1948	22 nd	“Building Child Life for One World,” Date not available
1949	23 rd	Today’s Woman: Homemaker and Careerist, April 3-9
1953	27 th	Achieving Peace Through Creative Experiences, March 15-21
1955	29 th	Education for Social Change, March 20-25
1957	31 st	Achieving Self-Fulfillment Through Understanding, March 25-31
1958	32 nd	Achieving Happiness through Creative Experience, March 23-20
1960	34 th	Register and Vote! A Necessity for Good Citizenship, April 3-10

³¹Exact date not available.

Appendix D

Comparison of Illiteracy Rates

Illiteracy Rates 1900-1930, United States, North Carolina and Guilford County

Census Year	United States	North Carolina	Guilford County
1900	8.2	20.4	13.3
1910	n/a	18.5	11.9
1920	6.0	13.1	7.1
1930	4.3	10.1	5.1

Illiteracy Rates by Race 1900 – 1930, United States, North Carolina and Guilford County

Race	Census Year	United States	North Carolina	Guilford County
White	1900	4.2	9.3	5.8
Black		4.0	11.1	7.5
White	1910	n/a	12.3	7.8
Black		n/a	31.9	24.2
White	1920	4.0	8.2	4.1
Black		22.9	24.5	17.5
White	1930	2.7	5.6	2.9
Black		16.3	20.6	12.1